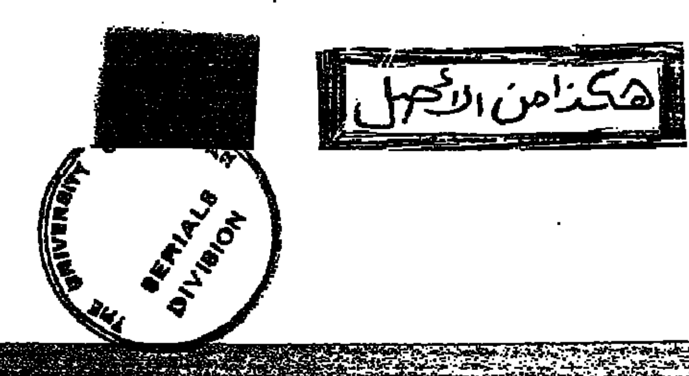


U.S. Planes Fired Radioactive Bullets Near Okinawa

TOKYO – U.S. marine corp aircraft fired 1,520 bullets containing radioactive "depleted uranium" during military drills near Okinawa, the Japanese government announced Monday.

The bullets were mistakenly fired in late 1995 and early 1996 off the island of Okinawa but the U.S. authorities only told Japan last month, officials said.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

TEHRAN TIMES

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President to Attend Experts Assembly Session

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is to leave here today for the holy city of Qom to attend the annual session of the Experts Assembly and also to inaugurate several development and cultural projects in the province.

According to the Constitution the Experts Assembly convenes at least twice a year.

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Islamic Republic of Iran Powerful, Democratic, Independent



Photos: Abbas Takin:

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here on Monday said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a democratic, powerful and the most independent country in the world and that all the decisions on political, cultural, economic and military-related matters are made by the people themselves or their representatives in the Parliament.

Addressing a large gathering of people at the Azadi Square on the 18th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the President said that, today, the future of the Iranian people is not sealed by the big powers and that they determine their fate themselves.

President Rafsanjani underlined that the objectives of the Islamic Revolution manifested themselves in the main slogan chanted by the Iranian people during the days of the revolution, namely "Independence, Freedom and Islamic Republic." He added that, today, all those ideals have been materialized in the country.

The president further hailed the people for their massive turnout in the nationwide rallies to mark the 18th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution, terming the turnout an unprecedented event in the world. "Presently, people from all walks of life actively take part in national, revolutionary and Islamic gatherings throughout the country and the support of the people for the Islamic Revolution is remarkable," he added.

Rafsanjani reiterated that the world should realize that the Iranian people's presence in different scenes is not a usual phenomenon. "18 years after the victory of revolution, this is a sign of solidarity and loyalty to the revolution and its ideals," he stressed.

(Contd on Pg.14)

Millions Participate in Qods Day Rallies



Photo: Abbas Takin

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – Rallies to mark the International Day of Qods were held in Iran and some other countries in the world on the last Friday in the holy fasting month of Ramazan, Feb. 7. The people who took part in the worldwide rallies strongly protested the occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands, particularly the city of Bait-ul-Moqaddass (Jerusalem), by the Zionist regime and called for the repulsion of the Zionist occupiers from those territories.

In Tehran, there was a massive turnout and the participants chanted 'death to Israel' and 'death to the United States' and called for the retrieval of the oppressed Palestinians' rights and liberation of Bait-ul-Moqaddass from the Zionist occupiers. Also, a six-point resolution was read to the gathering and was unanimously approved of by those present at the rally.

The first point stressed that the Iranian Muslim people, due to their Islamic commitment and in view of the ideals of late Imam Khomeini and guidelines of the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, will

(Contd on Pg.14)

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In the Name of God

And fight with them until there is no more persecution and religion should be only for Allah; but if they desist, then surely Allah sees what they do.

(HOLY QORAN) (8:39)

OPINION

Islamic Republic Eighteen Years After Revolution: Strong, Safe and Secure

Eighteen years ago on February 11 the courageous Iranian nation cast off the yoke of a 2500-year-old monarchy to establish the Islamic Republic and a government committed to the people's spiritual and material welfare.

Since then the path to achieve the revolution's ideals has not been smooth. The imperialists, divested of their vested interests in the country, never gave up the struggle to reestablish themselves by undermining the revolution.

The revolution was the biggest blow to the ambitions of global arrogance in the past two decades. It is a fact that Iran is the most strategically located country in the Middle East and one of the richest. There was much at stake in a country that was the key to stability in oil prices. And, the global arrogance knew that the revolution was not easy to upturn. It was fought with blood and tears. The day the U.S. proxy left Iran, it knew he was gone for good.

Why was the monarchy in this country despised while in other countries monarchies just as rotten are still in power? The reasons are obvious. People here supported a revolution that first and foremost respected their religious values. The Shah forgot that he could not separate the people from their deep love of Islam. Secondly, he did not value human life either and disposed of it freely. Thirdly, he sold the country to the U.S. in exchange for the assurance of political protection.

In short, Iran during the time of the Shah, had totally lost its political and economic independence, and the people were reduced to slaves under a so-called democracy that served the interests of foreign powers. Morality was on the verge of extinction. However, global arrogance was struck just on time. On February 11, 1979, the Iranian people once and for all decided to be masters of their fate. The rest is history. Since then the U.S. and its dummies have been grieving and meeting defeat after defeat in efforts to retrieve their "losses" in Iran and in the region.

After 18 years of struggle and vigilance, Iran has successfully put behind several military coups, insurgencies, and an eight-year military invasion. One after another, plots against the country have been engineered and executed by skillful U.S. hands, but the great Iranian nation has thwarted them all. No doubt, Washington's resolve at defeating the revolution is getting stronger, but to no avail.

The past 18 years have given the U.S. ample opportunity to learn. Unfortunately, it is hard of learning. They say truth is difficult to accept when it is not tested. Why should it be difficult for the U.S. to accept that it is impossible to defeat a revolution that is supported by the masses? Who could deny the fact that the 1979 revolution was a popular one?

Perhaps the U.S. has become addicted to making grave mistakes. Its record in Vietnam, in Somalia, and in the Philippines are but some examples. Now, strong countries that value independence, particularly in Asia, are wary of any U.S. move aimed at interference in their domestic affairs.

It is not out of place to say that the Islamic Republic of Iran has pioneered in the struggle for independence. It was one of the ideals of the revolution and one that it has championed all these 18 years.

No power, either big or small, can now pose the slightest threat to the security of the Islamic Republic. And, it must be remembered that its sensitive location in the world also makes Iran the key to the security of the area i.e., the oil-rich Persian Gulf region.

Our brothers in the southern part of the Persian Gulf must take heed. They must not allow their lands, harbors and territorial waters to be used by alien powers to hatch plots against Iran. Instability in this country will not be to the interests of any country collaborating with the global arrogance and that of the entire region. (Contd on Pg. 14)

Imam Khomeini's Path Will Be Continued Under All Conditions

TEHRAN — At the 22nd of Bahman rallies in Tehran, the resolution of the day's mass rally was read at Azadi Square pledging that the glorious path of the Founder of the Islamic Republic, the late Imam Khomeini, will be continued under all conditions.

Paying glowing tribute to the late Imam and renewing allegiance with his ideals, the resolution said that the sayings, teachings and guidelines of the late Imam will keep alight the guiding torch for the committed nation of Iran in all its plannings, political and social affairs and policy makings.

The resolution further added that the key to success and survival of the glorious revolution is following the leadership and *Velayat-e Faqih* (rule of supreme jurisprudence) and therefore the nation will do all in its power to follow the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

It further pledged support to the officials of the country and hailed the administration's efforts to eradicate poverty and promote social justice.

The resolution referring to the forthcoming seventh presidential elections lauded the large-scale construction plans launched by the administration of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Emphasizing that the Islamic Revolution is based on divine values and Islam, the resolution added that spiritual values should remain in the forefront of all programs and social vices should be severely combatted.

Therefore, special attention should be paid to the young generation in particular as to keep them immune of deviation and corruption.

The resolution reiterated that the U.S. administration because of its unconditional support for the Zionist regime and its deep hostility and plots against the Muslims is the most vicious arrogant power. The nation will resist all these plots and will defend its territorial integrity.

If the American statesmen in continuation of their hostile policies against Iran make a foolish move, they and their puppet regimes will face the revolutionary wrath and retaliation of the Iranian nation.

The resolution also renewed solidariry with the genuine Islamic and liberation movements throughout the world and denounced atrocities of the Zionist regime and silence of the international bodies against the Zionist crimes and the compromising attitude of the reactionary regimes of the region towards the peace process. It further condemned the discord among the Afghan groups.

The resolution also demanded the officials to prevent spread of culture of extravagance and promoting the Qoranic values in order to ward off the cultural assault of the West.

It praised the role of the Basij in all fronts of the country, in cultural, social, economic and construction fields.

In conclusion it paid glowing tribute to the martyrs of the Revolution and the war disabled, saying that the Revolution owes its continuation to their self-sacrifice.

(IRNA)

Foreign Dignitaries Extend Condolences on Quake Disaster



Photo: Abbas Takin

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – The senior officials of foreign countries in separate messages expressed sympathy with the victims of last Tuesday earthquakes which hit the northern Province of Khorasan.

Pakistan's President Sardar Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, and Prime Minister Miraj Khalid sent separate cables of condolences to Iran's President Hojjatoleslam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Wednesday expressing their condolences to him for the killer quake in Khorasan Province of Iran.

They said in their messages that the government and people of Pakistan shared the grief of the people of Iran over the loss of the human life in the country.

The Leader of Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and Prime Minister-elect, Nawaz Sharif, in a message to Presidnet Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, on Saturday expressed condolences over loss of life in the Quake.

In his message, Nawaz Sharif extended sympathy of the Pakistani nation to the victims of the disater.

President Qazi Shahabuddin Ahmad of Bangladesh and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed on Friday in separate messages to President Rafsanjani expressed condolences over the incident.

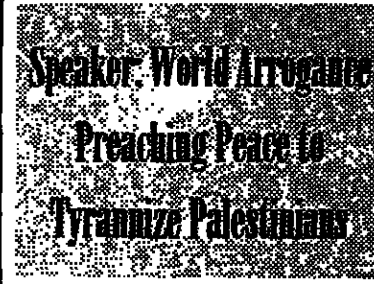
The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yukihiko Ikeda, also sent a similar message to his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Velayati.

He expressed hope that life in the quake-stricken regions will return to normal soon.

Two earthquakes measuring 6.1 and 5.4 degrees on the open-ended Richter scale hit several cities in Khorasan Province, leaving at least 80 dead and hundreds injured.

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, on Thursday commissioned delegates of his own to survey conditions at quake-stricken areas and to help victims.

A group of Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) (Physicians without borders) arrived in Bojnourd, Khorasan Province, Friday afternoon to render services to the victims of the quakes.



Speaker: World Arrogance Preaching Peace to Tyrannize Palestinians

TEHRAN — Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri said in his pre-sermon speech at the Tehran Friday Prayer that the leaders of arrogant world powers were preaching peace in a bid to tyrannize the Palestinians even more than they had already done.

He said the Zionists indulge in the thought of "the River Nile to the Euphrates" and that they were inching ahead into Arab lands on the pretext of intending to protect the security of Zionist settlers.

As rallies from different parts of the capital, marking International Qods Day converged on Tehran University campus, Nateq Nouri said that to defend Palestine is to defend Islam. He added that it was a duty of all Muslims to champion the denied rights of Palestinians.

The Majlis speaker said, "For the Western standard bearers of the human rights to defend oppressed people is to engage in acts of terrorism, while they did not even offer a verbal expression of their sympathy to the Palestinians."

(IRNA)

President Rafsanjani Receives Congratulation Messages on Bahman 22

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN -- President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani received messages of felicitation from foreign ranking officials on the occasion of the 18th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, in his message said that the abiding friendship between Pakistan and Iran is based on common religious and cultural heritage and reflects the firm resolve of the two countries to further intensify mutual cooperation.

Pakistan is firmly committed to a close bilateral relationship with Iran, with mutual trust, understanding and enhanced cooperation in all fields, he added.

In a separate message, the Pakistani Prime Minister Malik Miraj Khalid also congratulated the Iranian president on the occasion.

Part of Khalid's message said that the strong ties existing between Pakistan and Iran are deeply rooted in history, common faith, and a shared cultural tradition.

The Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed also in a message to President Rafsanjani felicitated the Iranian nation and the government on the anniversary of Iran's 1979 Revolution.

According to Bangladeshi State New Agency, she expressed hope that Tehran-Dhaka friendly relations would further strengthen in the coming years.

Islamic Revolution Anniversary Marked Worldwide

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN – Ceremonies in commemoration of the 18th victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution were held in different parts of the world.

According to an IRNA report, a ceremony was held in Vienna on Sunday to mark the occasion.

Iranian Ambassador to Austria Mahdi Mohtashami said at the ceremony that despite the plots hatched against the Islamic Revolution, Iran is stronger and more powerful than ever.

The Greek-Iranian Friendship Association in cooperation with the Iranian Culture Center in Athens organized a ceremony Sunday night to celebrate the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution.

Speaking at the ceremony, Karim Taal, official in charge of the Iranian Cultural Center, said that after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, "We Iranians were born again and got united. It is a very great day for us."

President of the Greek-Iranian Friendship Association, Professor Evangellos Moutsopolos, stresse[d] that during his visits to Iran, h[e] was surprised by the great ad[-]vances made in the Islamic Repub[-]lic.

In Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, stu[-]dents and professors at Bishke[k] University celebrated the anniver[-]sary of the Islamic Revolution o[n] Thursday.

In a brief speech, the Chance[l]lor of the university outlined th[e] impacts of the Islamic Revolutio[n] on the political structure of th[e] modern world.

Similar ceremonies were hel[d] in Bangladesh, India, Romani[a], Cyprus, Pakistan, Qatar, Turk[-]menistan, Croatia, Indonesi[a], France, Kuwait, Britain, the Phil[-]ippines and other world countrie[s].

On Friday, the Iranian Em[-]bassy in Mexico City, Mexic[o] received a message from the city mayor felicitating the 18th victo[ry] anniversary of the Islamic Revol[u]tion to the government and t[he] people of Iran.

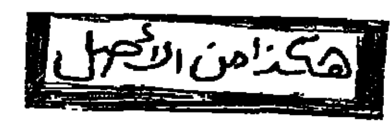
Mohammadi: Sarkouhi's Case Not Related to Iran-Germany Relations

TEHRAN — Mahmoud Mohammadi, spokesman of Iran's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday that the case of Faraj Sarkouhi, once editor of the Persian weekly *Adineh*, who was arrested in southern Iran while jumping the border Monday, was not related to relations between Iran and Germany.

The Foreign Ministry spoke[s]man who was responding to t[he] statement of the speaker of t[he] German Foreign Ministry on t[he] same subject said the arrest of t[he] Iranian editor was simply a n[a]tional issue that did not warrant t[he] interference of any foreign go[v]ernment.

He said in reference to Sark[-]ouhi that the Islamic governme[nt] could not possibly ignore its ow[n] laws and principles when dealin[g] with "a person who has commit[ted] heavy crimes."

(IRNA)



Time Ripe for PG States To Realize Iran Is Not Expansionist

Tehran Times Service

TEHARN — The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khameini here Sunday said that Iran is a powerful country and that any country deciding to invade it will be rebuffed.

The Leader made the remark in his sermon addressing the worshippers on the occasion of the Feast of Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramazan.

Iran has never had any expansionist plan in the past, it does not have any at present and will not have in the future, for expansionism is against our beliefs, the Leader underlined.

Addressing the Persian Gulf states, the Leader said, over the years, our enemies have been trying to frighten the countries of the Persian Gulf into buying more armaments by projecting Iran as a threat to their security. The enemies tried to sell armament to the regional countries and maintain their illegitimate presence in the region through such propaganda.

The time is ripe for the Persian Gulf countries to realize that the U.S. does not care for their interests and that the main aim of the Zionist propaganda is to justify their presence in the region.

All regional countries should realize that the region is a sensitive one and that all the regional countries should take precautionary measures to prevent the region from becoming insecure.

The main loser of the insecurity in the region will be those who prepare the ground for this insecurity by surrendering their territory to the alien powers, the Leader said, adding, if a country commits a blunder, making the region insecure by an uncalculated move, it will fall the first prey to the flames of the fire of insecurity.

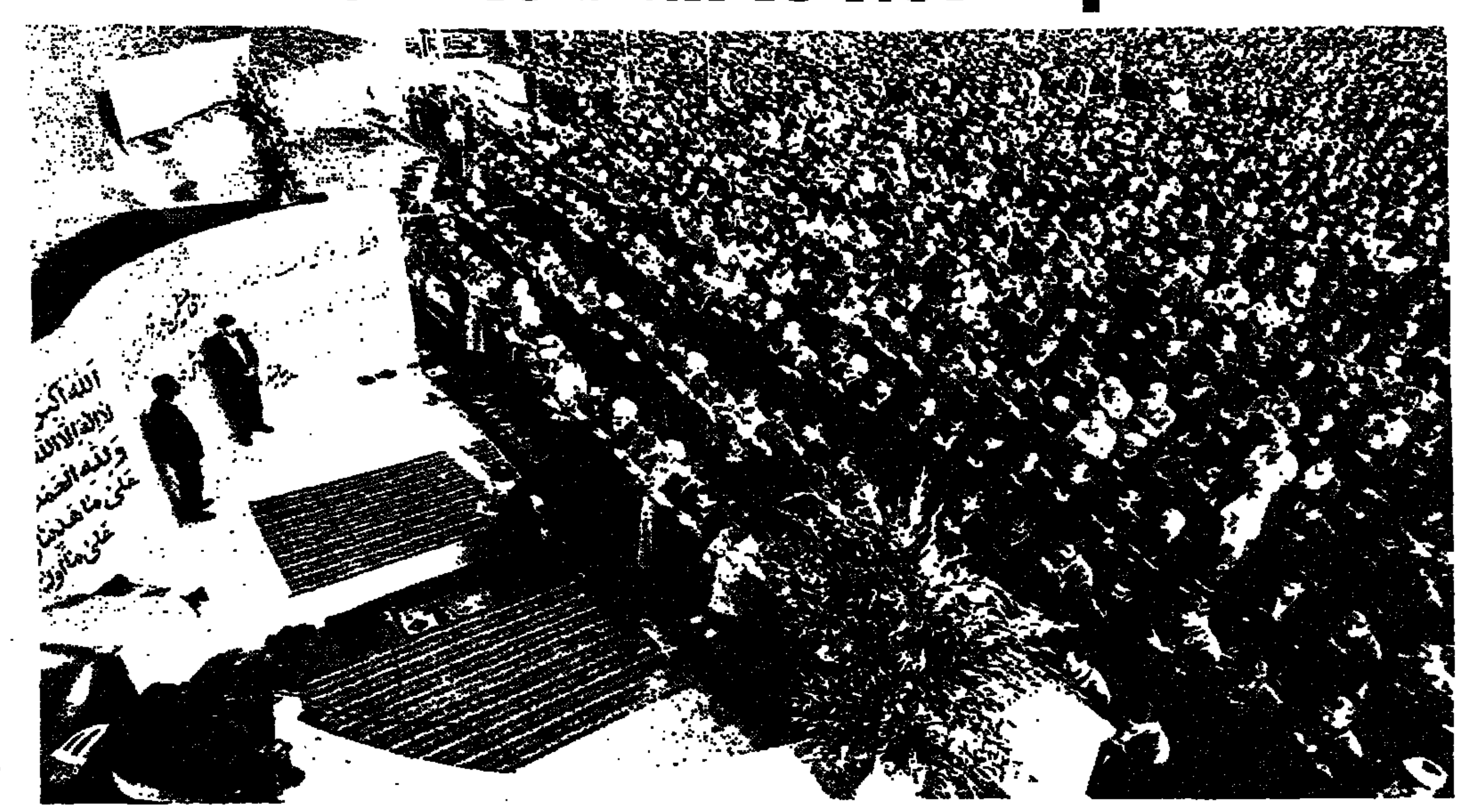


Photo: Kaveh Ahmadi

Foreign Dignitaries Hail Islamic Revolution of Iran

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Syrian Ambassador to Tehran, Ahmad al-Hassan said here on Wednesday that Iran's role in maintaining regional security was so important that no country or power can ignore it.

Al-Hassan told IRNA that such an important role originates from Iran's geographical location and its huge economic and human potential.

Tehran is pursuing a wise policy in its relations with other countries and is has made successful efforts to settle regional crises with an aim of guaranteeing peace and security in the region, the Syrian diplomat said.

He said that Syria was confident that improvement of relations between Iran and Arab states would serve the interests of Arabs and Muslims and would consolidate security and stability in the region.

He underlined his country's opposition to disarmament of Hizbollah forces in Southern Lebanon, saying that Islamic and national resistance in Southern Lebanon was of legitimate right vis-a-vis occupation of Lebanese lands by Israel.

Senior Lebanese Alim Allamah Sheikh Mohammad Hossein Fadhlullah in his Friday prayer sermons lauded the historical initiative of the father of the Islamic Revolution, the late Imam Khomeini, in assigning last Friday of the blessed month of Ramazan as the International Qods Day.

Fadhlullah said the move had made Qods to turn into the symbol of Palestine's aspiration in various political and religious respects and provided a suitable ground for its liberation.

He thanked Iran for its contribution to the issue of Qods liberation in order to keep Palestine's aspiration alive.

He said the day was a proper opportunity for expressing opposition to the situation imposed by the global arrogance on the world nations. Sheikh Fadhlullah criticized certain Arab rulers for preventing convention of world Qods Day ceremonies in their respective countries and said the act stemmed from the fact that these governments were willing to curb Islamic grounds activities for liberation of Qods and this would be considered as a grave blunder on their part.

A leading English-language weekly of Cyprus wrote that the Islamic Republic of Iran has become a major power in the region and a hub for countries of central Asia to the rest of the world.

"Iraq's defeat and isolation in the Persian Gulf war and Iraq's blatant aggression first against Iran and then against Kuwait rehabilitated Iran in the eyes of the many, the weekly wrote in its latest issue published Friday.

Palestinian ambassador to Almaty, Mohammed Tarshahani, lauded the move inspired by the founder of the Islamic Republic the late Imam Khomeini in assigning the last Friday of the fasting month of Ramazan as the world Qods Day.

Talking to IRNA here on Wednesday, Tarshahani said that Palestinian people believed in consolidation of solidarity among the world Muslims with a view to liberating their usurped land. He said that the world Qods Day was the best opportunity available to attain such a solidarity and liberation of the noble Qods.

The celebrated commentator of Russian magazine, Viktor Boldirov, told IRNA here that the founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, had instituted a revolution for a divine cause.

He said like the prophets, Imam Khomeini, too, had many enemies but that he never abandoned his cause.

The trail blazed by the late Imam is eternal which none can alter, he added. The Russian commentator said that the United States was exploiting every possible device to defeat Iran, but, he observed, internationally, Iran has such a status that Europe was thinking of further developing relations with Iran rather than bow to Washington. Noted Kashmiri leader and Jammu and Kashmir Panther's Party chief Bhim Singh has said that the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran was a "watershed development in the history of Iran and the Islamic world."

Singh told IRNA that Iran has since the victory of the Islamic Revolution made tremendous progress in all fields of economy, science, culture, industry and agriculture.

He said that the post-revolution Iran is a true democracy which guarantees equal rights, rational freedom and social justice to all irrespective of their creed. color, race and sex.

Several foreign nationals residing in Zahedan, southern Iranian city, told IRNA that as a supporter of the oppressed and the deprived, Islamic Revolution of Iran is a source of honor for all Muslims.

A Pakistani national, Heydar Ali, said the key for Iranian people's success in their struggle against the global arrogance is following the guidelines of the founder of the Islamic Revolution, the late Imam Khomeini as well as their unity and cohesion. Another Palestinian national, Ajar Malek, said the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran had brought hope to the hearts of all the oppressed nations to the effect that they consider Islamic Iran as their supporter.

Ahmad Qandhari, an immigrant Afghan residing in Zadedan, told IRNA that victory of the Islamic Revolution opened a new horizon to freedom and salvation of the Iranian nation, disappointing enemies of Islam.



TEHRAN -- At a meeting with the Air Force Commanders and personnel here Thursday the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said: "As the Islamic Republic of Iran has the longest coastline in the Persian Gulf stretching from the strait of Hormuz to Khor Abdullah, it, therefore, wants to see that security is fully established in the region and as such Iran is devoting its time and energy in achieving this end." Photo: Kaveh Ahmadi

Qods Should Be Liberated Through Armed Struggle

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — Hojjatoleslam Karroubi, who was participating in the International Qods rallies here Friday told IRNA that the only way to liberate Qods was to take up arms and fight for its liberation.

He said peace devices in the region as adopted by Western powers would not the least work since those powers were concerned a lot more about the interests of the Zionist entity than the Palestinians.

He added that the so-called peace as dictated by its brokers would never be acceptable to the Palestinians, and commented that it was the custom of the world arrogance every now and then to try to overshadow the struggle of Palestinians by proposing peace.

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Mahdavi Kani who was with demonstrators on the occasion of the International Qods Day rallies here said that the massive rallies of Iran's fasting people on Friday was a slap on the face of the enemies of Islamic Republic.

He said Muslim nations could not rely on their governments on the question of Qods and had to form an alliance among themselves for a final struggle with the international Zionism.

Kani added that the media belonging to the world arrogance would obviously try to suppress the news of the Qods day rallies, and added that the Qods Day demonstrations over the years had woken Muslim nations and neutralized international plots against them.

Churches' Bells Toll on Bahman 22

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN — The bells of Tehran's churches tolled on Monday on the auspicious occasion of the victory anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Feb. 10, 1979).

Juzef Aqajanian, an Iranian Christian who was attending the Bahman 22 rallies, said, "Since the victory of the Revolution we have witnessed great achievements in our country." He added that the recent developments in Iran were so eye- catching that have been lauded through the world.

Mary Manukian, another participant in rallies, said that today is a great eid (feast) for Iranian people. "It's of great pleasure that the Iranian people from all walks of life have gathered to express their appreciation to the Revolution," she added.

Tehran-Based Ambassadors Call On President Rafsanjani



TEHRAN -- President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani had a meeting with ambassadors, charge d'affaires and foreign representatives in Tehran to commemorate the eve of Eid Fitr and the 18th anniversary of triumph of the Islamic Revolution.

Initially, the foreign emissaries congratulated the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatolah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and the president on the auspicious occasions.

President Rafsanjani thanked the ambassadors for their efforts in bringing about promotion in bilateral relations, saying that "you as the representatives of your countries in Islamic Iran can reflect the realities taking shape in the Islamic Republic to the rest of the world."

The president then said that Iran's dependence on foreign powers during the monarchial era was a bitter experience of past history.

He stressed that today Islamic Iran is proud to be able to make its own decision independently and formulate policies for its people.

Rafsanjani stressed that the ability of the officials to independently decide on major issues in the political economic and social dimensions is a matter of great pride to Islamic Iran and it can be regarded as one of the major achievements of the Islamic Revolution.

The president said that Islamic Iran has allocated a big bite of its budget for the coming fiscal year, of over $10 billion for development projects of the country.

He said Iran has succeeded in zeroing the budget deficit during the past two years, and has also benefited from the surplus in the hard currency.

Rafsanjani underlined that it is a matter of great significance to the Iranian nation that the continued conspiracies of the enemies particularly that of the United States of America, has failed to stop the growth, development, and progress of the Islamic Republic.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has become totally self-sufficient and is not only capable of undertaking highly technological industrial projects but also is all set to provide technical and technological engineering services to other nations compatible to international standards," stated the president.

He stated that "the Islamic Republic of Iran is pursuing a policy of peace, stability and coexistence among the community of nations across the world."

The president said that Iran has proved beyond speck of doubt that it is the staunch supporter of peace in the region and among the neighboring countries.

He however made it clear "the Islamic Republic of Iran considered the illegitimate presence of the United States in the region as a great danger."

Referring to the crises in Afghanistan, Palestine, Tajikistan, Karabakh, Kashmir, Sudan, Rwanda. Zaire, Somalia. Rafsanjani said "Islamic Iran has tried to bring peace through its initiatives based on its humanitarian policies and in some areas it has been successful."

The president considered that peace and stability are essential in the reconstruction and development in the Third World.

"Iran with its great strides in development and its stretagic position believes in the commitments to peace and stability in the world, particularly that of the region" he said.

Rafsanjani criticized the so-called Mid-East peace process. saying that "the Israeli claim for peace is nothing but one big lie.

"The path of peace process being pursued through the leadership of the United States is definitely unreliable and unstable which is merely meant to protect the Israeli interests."

He stated that through the peace process, the 50 year Jihad movement of the suffering Palestinian refugees cannot be burried and that the sovereign right of Palestinians over their ancestoral land cannot be politically bargained at the table."

Prior to the president's address. Ali Akbar Velayati the Iranian Foreign Minister said that "the Islamic Republic of Iran has diplomatic relations with most of the nations in the world basing its policy on the preservation of interests and mutual respect." *(IRNA)*

UAE Awards Consultancy Contract for Petrochemical Project

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - Abu Dhabi and its Norwegian-Finnish partners on Wednesday awarded the consultancy contract for their major petrochemical project to a U.S. company's subsidiary.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Borealis said they had signed a letter of intent to award the project management consultancy services contract to Fluor Mideast, a subsidiary of Fluor Daniel Inc., one of the world's largest engineering and construction companies, AFP reported.

"Fluor Mideast will provide design, engineering, procurement and construction services for the ethylene unit, two polyethylene units and associated utilities and offsite facilities," ADNOC said in a statement.

The statement did not mention the value of the contract or say where the contractor is based. ADNOC officials were not available for comment.

ADNOC and Borealis, a joint Norwegian-Finnish venture, signed an agreement in 1996 to set up the petrochemical project, which will produce 450,000 tons of polyethlene and 600,000 tons of ethylene. The ethylene unit will later be expanded to between 750,000 and 900,000 tons per year.

The project at Ruwais near Abu Dhabi city will be completed at the end of 2000 to become the UAE's first petrochemical complex.

ADNOC, which runs the energy sector in the emirate, controls 60 percent of the venture. The rest is owned by Borealis, the largest producer of polyethylene in Europe and the fifth biggest ethylene producer in the world.

A separate joint-venture company, owned 50-50 by ADNOC and Borealis, will be established to market polyethylene, the statement said.

Industry sources earlier estimated the cost of the petrochemical project at around 800 million dollars. It will utilise the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) huge gas reserves of around 5.7 trillion cubic meters (190 trillion cubic feet).

Abu Dhabi, the main oil producer in the UAE, has been engaged in multi-billion-dollar plans to upgrade its crude output capacity, set up a petrochemical industry and expand its refining and LNG facilities.

Iran's Oil Export to Mount Up to $1.75b

TEHRAN -- Export of oil-based products by Iran is expected to rise up to $1.75b by next year (March 21 1997-March 20. 1998) once Bandar Abbas Refinery is put into operation.

Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company Seyed Kazim Vaziri Mahaneh said here on Friday that volume of Iran's oil products export would reach $1.24 billion by the year end on March 20 from $250 million in 1989. Vaziri said that Iranian oil industry is now capable to expand its acitivities in foreign countries.

(IRNA)

U.S. Hesitant in Implementing Iran Sanctions Threat

LONDON -- The U.S. failure to react to impending oil deals in Iran has led to speculation whether President Clinton will enforce secondary sanctions threats legislated six months ago.

Middle East Economic Digest this week suggested that Washington may have "suspended at least temporary" any intentions with the U.S. State Department's Office of economic sanctions staying quiet on recent energy deals involving Malaysia and Turkey.

The office, which took until December to publishing guidelines still appear vague, has itself conceded there is considerable uncertainty over what is liable to sanctions, the magazine said.

Neither the White House nor Senator Al D'amoto, who was the driving force behind the legislation, have commented on reports of a second investment contract being negotiated by Total of France which could constitute a major breach.

Previously both have been outspoken in reacting to any suggestion of any foreign investment in Iran and sent out verbal and written warnings to oil companies to stay out.

The U.S. reluctance to impose the extra-territorial legislation follows widespread opposition from its allies and growing calling for the second Clinton administration to review its policy towards Iran. *(IRAN)*

Number of Telephone Lines Rose to 5,700,000

KERMANSHAH -- Number of telephone lines ceded to applicants throughout the country has rose up to 5,700,000 this year from the total of 850,000 before the triumph of the 1979 Islamic Revolution said Deputy of the Telecommunications Company of Iran in charge of Research Affairs, Shadkam here on Sunday.

Shadkam said that number of villages provided with telephone lines is now 13.941. The number was 312 before the Islamic Revolution.

He added that number of the city and iner-city phone booths has increased up to 305,000.

Meanwhile, managing director of the provincial telecommunications company, Ahmad Nazarpour said here on Sunday that a total of 134 telecommunications projects implemented at a cost of over Rls.53 billion, were put into operation during the Ten-Day Dawn January 31 and February 10) period. *(IRNA)*

Dollar Recovers After G7, Wall Street Boosts Bourses

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The dollar was recovering in European trading on Monday after finance chiefs from the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised nations signalled at the weekend they may try to halt its rise.

On European stock exchanges leading shares moved higher, with sentiment boosted by Wall Street's 86 point rise on Friday, a Reuter dispatch reported.

The dollar lost some steam in Asia overnight after G7 ministers surprised the markets by appearing to agree that the currency's strong rise should come to an end.

It fell sharply in early Asian trading to just over the key 120 yen level before picking up. In early European trading it had recovered to around 123 yen, not far short of its Friday New York close of 123.10.

Against the mark it was at around 1.6530 in the European morning, down from its 1.6610 New York close on Friday.

It is very well bid this morning, said Nick Parsons, currency strategist at Banque Paribas. I don't think the market is going to give this up at the first attempt.

In a statement released after a meeting on Saturday, the G7 nations -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States -- signalled their desire for stability in foreign exchange markets by saying their currencies were no longer misaligned in a major way.

The accord was good news for Japan, which has grown increasingly worried about the dollar's sharp climb against the yen, but analysts warned the G7 effect could be limited.

Whatever G7 wish, they can't wish away the interest rate differential, they can't wish away the growth cycles and they can't wish away the generally more favorable attitude for U.S. assets, Paribas' Parsons said.

Beyond the initial impact, the G7 is likely to have little more effect than slowing the dollar's rise, as markets become more cautious and perhaps fearful of intervention, said Klaus Baader, senior currency economist at Deutsche Morgan Grenfell.

He noted there was a chance of a U.S. interest rate increase soon and even if there were not, there was no prospect of a rate rise in either Germany or Japan to support their currencies.

Generally, traders were looking for a fairly rapid move back to the 1.6750 mark and 125 yen areas reached last Friday, although above 125 the market would start to become extremely wary of Bank of Japan intervention.

On the Equity Front London Shares, which scored another record high on Friday, were cautiously higher, boosted by Wall Street and by lower-than-expected British producer price inflation figures -- indicating an early British interest rate hike is less likely.

Dealers said trading was edgy, however, with some investors taking profits after Friday's record stock index rise.

Now that the FTSE is above 4,300 people are a bit nervous. It's not too surprising that we're seeing a few people lock in some profits, the head of trading at a large investment bank said.

Iranian Businessmen to Boost Activities in Azerbaijan

BAKU -- In a meeting with Deputy Chairman of the Azerbaijan Irano-Axeri Economic Commission, Jaraeliev, Iranian businessmen exchanged views on ways of expanding trade relations between Baku and Tehran here Friday.

In the meeting, the Azeri officials were briefed on the latest development in the area of commercial activities and on measures taken to set up a union of Iranian businessmen in that country.

Yashar Aliev welcomed the initiative taken by Iranian businessmen for setting up of the union, saying that this measure demonstrated that Iranians were all set to pump in capital investments in his country on the long term bases.

He indicated that the union's activity be based on study, identifying areas suitable for ecouraging Iranians to invest and promote business activities in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

The Union of Iranian Businessmen which has its offices in Baku will start its activities in the near future.

(IRAN)

1,600 Telecom Projects Operational

KERMANSHAH -- Post, Telegraph and Telephone Minister Mohammad Gharazi said here on Monday that 1,600 postal and telecommunications projects are to be put into operation during the Ten-Day Dawn (January 31-February 10), marking the 18th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.



Gharazi, who was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of a mobile telephone and data dissemination center in this western Iranian province on Sunday, said the projects have cost. Rls.830 billion,

He added that 792,000 mobile codes will be ceded to the public throughout the country by the end of next Iranian year, March 20, 1998. *(IRNA)*

Slight Fall in OPEC Barrel Price

Tehran Times Service

TEHRAN - The average spot price of OPEC's basket of seven crudes fell by 28 cents in January to 23.23 dollars per barrel, the *Middle East Economic Survey (MEES)* reported on Monday, AFP reported.

However, the January price was still 2.94 dollars per barrel higher than the basket's average for 1996, said the Nicosia-based specialist review.

MEES said the average organization of petrol exporting countries (OPEC) barrel price in 1996 has risen by 20 percent, or 3.43 dollars per barrel, to 20.29 dollars per barrel, compared to 1995.

It added that OPEC output had increased by 3.5 percent, from 24.77 million barrels per day to 25.646 MBD, during the year.

هكذا من الأصل

SPORTS SUMMARY

Tehran Times Service

FOOTBALL

Toshack Quits

MADRID: John Toshack, under-fire manager of struggling Spanish first division Deportivo la Coruna, resigned late Sunday. Club president Augusto Cesar Lendoiro confirmed Toshack's departure after meeting the 47-year-old Welshman following Sunday's 2-2 league draw with Celta Vigo. Deportivo are without a win so far this year.

Toshack, who coached Real Madrid to the 1990 championship, has been locked in a row with the club's directors over their transfer policy since joining Deportivo in 1995. He has also come under pressure from local fans who have been greeting him at training sessions with banners proclaiming "Toshack Go Home." Lendoiro said that assistant manager Jose Manuel Corral would take over from Toshack until June.

Toshack's contract with the club was due to expire at the end of the season.

Real Surge Clear as Barcelona Crash in Derby

MADRID: Unbeaten Real Madrid stretched their lead at the top of the Spanish first division to eight points on Sunday when main rivals Barcelona slumped to a 2-0 defeat in their local derby against lowly Espanyol. Real did not have things all their own way, however, and they needed all of their concentration to hang on for victory in a five-goal thriller at Hercules Alicante — teenage sensation Raul Gonzalez scoring the vital third goal for the leaders. Barcelona's English manager Bobby Robson sat ashen-faced as his team, reduced to ten men, were undone by two penalties — both slotted home by Romania's former West Ham striker Florin Radciouiu.

Having put out Real to reach the quarterfinals of the Spanish Cup, Robson had been hoping for a good league result to fend off some of the criticism he has been receiving since replacing Johan Cruyff at the Helm. But from the moment midfielder Luis Figo was sent off at the start of the second half for fighting, it was an uphill battle.

Reigning champions Athletico Madrid went one down after half-an-hour but then turned on the style in front of their home fans to beat visiting Compostela 4-1. And Betis moved up to third place, two points behind Barcelona, thanks to a 3-1 home win over bottom club Extremadura.

Shearer Hopeful

LONDON: England Captain Alan Shearer will resume full training on Monday and is "very hopeful" of playing against Italy in their crucial World Cup qualifier at Wembley on Wednesday. Shearer, the world's most expensive player when he signed from Blackburn for 15 million pounds (22.5 million dollars) has been one of several key players battling against injuries — in his case a back problem — and England Coach Glenn Hoddle is desperate for the striker to play.

Hassler Out

BONN: Karlsruhe and German international midfielder Thomas Hassler will miss Saturday's resumption of the Bundesliga and will be out of action until March as he nurses a foot injury. Veteran Hassler, who has been out since November, had originally hoped to resume training this month.

Colombia Beat Slovakia

PEREIRA, Colombia: Columbia beat Slovakia 1-0 in their friendly international here Sunday thanks to a goal by Asprilla in the 52nd minute.

TENNIS

Dutch Comeback Sinks Romania

PARIS: The Netherlands, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, booked their passage into the Davis Cup quarterfinals in Bucharest on Sunday when they completed a thrilling 3-2 victory over world group newcomers Romania. Jan Siemerink, who crashed to a shock defeat against the Romanian number-two Andrei Pavel on Friday to leave his team trailing 0-2, was the Dutch hero on Sunday when he scored an inspired five-set victory over Adrian Voinea. The win put the Dutch back to 2-2 in the tie and the fight drained from the Romanians — Andrei Pavel won only six games against Paul Haarhuis in the final singles.

The Czech Republic, also trailing 1-2 at home to India after losing Saturday's doubles, were another team to turn around pending defeat. Petr Korda recovered to beat Leander Paes 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 and Jiri Novak then clinched the Czechs' victory by beating 478th-ranked Mahesh Bhupathi in straight-sets.

Sweden, last year's finalists, Spain and Italy all stormed home to 4-1 victories.

The Swedes beat Switzerland, Spain upset depleted Germany and Italy outplayed Mexico.

South Africa clinched a 3-1 win (the last singles was not played in the rain-delayed match) over 1994 and 1995 finalists Russia, who were without Yevgeny Kafelnikov and Alexander Volkov. Ellis Ferreria and Grant Stafford scored the winning point in the tie when they trounced Andrei Cherkasov and Andrei Olhovskiy 6-2, 3-6, 6-0, 6-2 in the doubles.

Arnaud Boetsch saved defending champions France from complete humiliation by winning the final rubber. He beat Patrick Rafter 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) but Sandon Stolle, who made his debut in the competition, earlier beat French number-one Cedric Pioline, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.



PALEROMO, Italy (February 5): Vladimir Jugovic of Juventus (R) fights for the ball with Jimmy Algerino of Paris Saint-Germain during the European Super Cup final in Palermo, Sicily. Juventus of Italy won the first leg in Paris 6-1 and the second 3-1.

(AFP PHOTO)

German Women Take Gold in Relay

OSRBLIE, Slovakia — Germany beat out determined Norwegian and Russian squads on Saturday to take the gold medal in the 4 x 7.5 kilometer women's relay of the Biathlon World Championship.

The Germans were the quickest and made no shooting errors to repeat their triumph from last year. They were clocked at 1 hour, 28 minutes, 36.9 seconds.

Having won two golds and one silver in 1996, the Germans were under pressure to do well again this time round but didn't manage to break away until Wednesday, when they took second in the men's relay. Then Ricco Gross won the gold Friday in the 20 kilometer men's race.

"We celebrated gross's victory, maybe that's why our team was in a good mood. We were a little bit nervous before the start," said Uschi Disl of the women's relay team.

All medalists Saturday ran well and shot faultlessly. Norway finished in 1:30:06.7 hours, only three seconds ahead of Russia.

"The fight for silver with Russia was interesting, very exciting," said Ann Elen Skjelbreid of Norway. (AP)

Indonesia Defeats Philippines in Doubles in Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Group 1

MANILA, Philippines — Indonesia won the doubles match Saturday against the Philippines, which is still ahead 2-1 in the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Group 1 competition.

Indonesians Sulistyo Wibowo and Bonit Wirwayan beat Filipino Michael Misa and Pio Tolentino, 6-1, 6-4, 6-0.

The Indonesians made the Filipinos run all over the court during the 65-minute match, scoring on body shots at least six times.

The Philippines won both opening singles matches against Indonesia on Friday. The reverse singles will be played on Sunday.

The games were played on the shell court of the Philippine Columbian Association in Manila.

This is the seventh Davis Cup contest between the two countries, with Indonesia winning the last three.

The winner will meet New Zealand in one of the zone's two final competitions for next year's world group. (AP)

Japan Beats South Korea in Davis Cup Doubles

SEOUL, South Korea — Japan beat South Korea 3-2 in the doubles game of the Davis Cup Asia-Oceania Group 1 preliminary competition in Seoul on Saturday.

Led by Shuzo Matsuiko, a quarterfinalist in last year's Wimbledon, Japan won the first two sets, but beat in the next two to South Korea's Yoon Yong-Il and Lee Hyung-Taik.

Matsuoka and Takao Suzuki came back win the fifth set and the game 6-3, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 8-6. (AP)

Gilg Defends Her Moguls Title

NAGANO, Japan — Candice Gilg of France defended her Moguls title Saturday in the Freestyle World Ski Championships while American Donna Weinbrecht unveiled a rare triple trick to win the silver medal.

Weinbrecht, 31, the 1992 Olympic and 1991 world champion from West Milford, New Jersey, finished with 24.60 points to Gilg's 24.84.

Tatjana Mittermayer of Germany won the bronze with 24.20 at Iizuna Kogen, a venue for the Nagano Winter Olympics next year.

On the men's side, Canadian Jean-Luc Brassard flashed the form which earned him the 1994 Olympic gold medal, cruising to his second World Moguls Championship with 27.52 points. He first captured the title in 1993.

Stephane Rochon, also of Canada, finished second with 26.00 points, followed by Sweden's Jesper Ronnback who took the bronze with 25.43.

Jim Moran, of Stowe, Vermont, had the best American finish, sixth, with 24.77 points, while his teammate Evans Dybvig, of Tunbridge, Vermont, was seventh with 24.69 under a warming sun.

"I was pretty nervous in the start," Brassard said, "but Pete (Judge, the Canadian coach) said, 'remember why you're doing this.' I said because I love it and I want to put on a good show for the crowd. And that picked me up. It was what I needed."

Ann Battelle, of Steamboat Springs, Colorado, finished fourth in the women's event, with Liz McIntyre, of Winter Park, Colorado, sixth.

McIntyre, nursing a painful shoulder injury for three weeks, also had an outstanding run in moving from 11th place to sixth after the qualifying run Wednesday.

World Cup Rookie Jillian Vogtli, of Ellicotville, New York, was 13th.

"I got a big smile," Weinbrecht said in the finish area, discussing her triple maneuver, a jump which featured three separate actions. "Goody (coach Jeff Good) pushed me to do a triple and I did it it's the first time I've ever trained top to bottom with a triple."

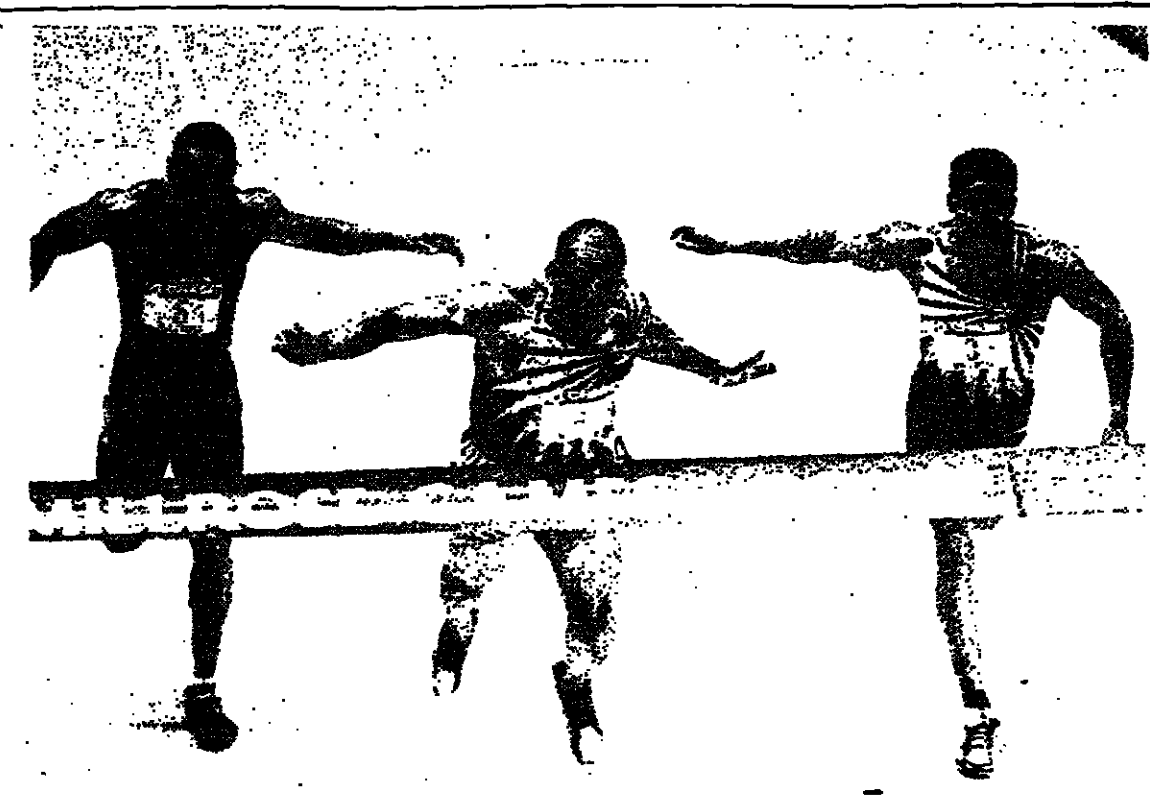
"I thought he was crazy when he said to try it. I was shocked but I'm glad I did it," Weinbrecht said. "I've always wanted to do a triple and I definitely think it's the wave of the future in women's Moguls, particularly next year at the Olympics."

The medal is the second won by U.S. skiers so far at Iizuna Kogen with the Aerials finals coming on Sunday to conclude the five-day world championships.

On Friday, Ian Edmondson, of Birmingham, Michigan, won a silver medal in acro-skiing.

Moguls-skiing was added to the official program of the Albertville Olympics in 1992 and Aerials for the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994.

The Nagano Games will feature Moguls and Aerials. (AP)



NEW YORK, NY, United States (February 7) : Bruny Surin (C) of Canada dips as he crosses the finish line ahead of Tim Harden (L), of the US, and Ato Bolden (R), of Trinidad, to win the 60-meter dash at the 1997 millrose Games at Madison Square Garden in New York. Surin won with a time of 6.58 seconds.

(AFP PHOTO)

Tajik President Resumes Talks on Hostage Release

DUSHANBE — Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov held talks for the second consecutive day Monday with Afghan warlord Ahmad Shah Masood to negotiate the release of 15 hostages being held to win the freedom of a former Tajik opposition leader.

The talks Monday were held in the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

Tajik opposition, led by Bakhrom Sadirov, seized the hostages -- including nine UN workers and a Tajik minister — last week to press demands for safe passage into Tajikistan for his elder brother Rizvon Sadirov and 40 of his men.

Sadirov and his followers are now in Afghan territory controlled by Masood, the military commander of the Afghan government that was ousted from Kabul in September by the Taleban fundamentalist

A spokesman for the president said Rakhmonov had spoken via a UN satellite telephone with Tajik Security Minister Saidamir Zukhurov, one of the hostages being held in Kalai Inal, a village 86 kilometers (50 miles) east of Dushanbe.

"The 15 hostages are not in danger," the deputy-minister for security Anatoly Kuptsov was quoted by Interfax as saying.

Late Monday morning the head of the presidential guard, General Gafar Mirzoyev, a Masood envoy and Sadirov's brother Rizvon left for Kalai Inal to continue negotiations, Rakhmonov's spokesman said.

Two issues were complicating talks, which opened Sunday at Kulyab, 200 kilometers (120 miles) southeast of Dushanbe in the former Soviet Central Asian Republic.

Firstly, Rizvon and his men are among Masood's most effective fighting units in his battle against the Taleban, and Massod reportedly is not willing to let them leave.

(AFP)

Okinawan Governor Opposes Law Change on Land for U.S. Bases

TOKYO -- Okinawan governor Masahide Ota Monday opposed a proposed change in the law allowing Japan's central government to retain private land for use by the U.S. military even after the leases have expired.

"The problem is important for Okinawa," Ota told a news conference. "We hope such a step will be avoided."

Some 3,000 land owners have refused to renew leases on about 129,000 square meters (425,700 square feet) of land used by 12 U.S. military facilities on the southern Japan island which are due to expire in May.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is considering submitting a parliamentary bill to revise the special land lease law to give the central government rights for the continued expropriation of the land once the leases have run out.

Ota said Okinawa would not be lured by a proposal made by a senior official of the Social Democratic Party of Japan, the LDP's ally in the government, to revise the law in exchange for a cut in the U.S. troops in Okinawa. *(AFP)*

Netanyahu, Arafat Meet to Chart Course for Peace

GAZA STRIP -- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat met Sunday and agreed on the launch of the next round of negotiations in the peace process.

The two leaders held two hours of talks on the Gaza-Israel border and announced afterwards that eight negotiating committees led by Arafat's second-in-command Mahmud Abbas and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy would meet next Sunday.

(AFP)

(Contd from Pg. 2)

OPINION

We reiterate. It is not to the interest of the United States to confront Iran. During the past 18 years the U.S. has tried all possible means to undermine the Islamic Republic but has only seen the power of the Iranian nation growing stronger. The U.S. should accept that the only way to deal with Iran is to treat it as an equal. Equals, under no circumstances, would impose terms on each other.

Confrontation will definitely not work. Iran is a powerful and independent country that is prepared to meet any country on equal terms. There is no way by which the U.S. can hope to open a dialogue that is founded on a feeling of superiority.

Washington should show sincerity by respecting its bilateral agreements with Iran, releasing Iran's frozen assets, bidding goodbye to its hostile policies, ending its insidious plots and propaganda aimed at discrediting the country and, last but not the least, respecting Iran's time-honored values.

With Warren Christopher gone, the U.S. can give a second thought to its Iran policy. It needs only to learn once and for all the lesson of the past eighteen years: that Iran will not be bullied into capitulation. Like a piece of metal tested by fire it is now in a better position to face enemies. There is no place for confrontation. Only stupid players raise their bets.

Four Hit as Croats Open Fire on Muslims

SARAJEVO -- Four Bosnians were hit by gunfire when Croats opened fire on Muslims visiting a cemetary in the Bosnian city of Mostar, said the UN on Monday.

UN spokesman Alex Ivanko said the Muslims were visiting graves in Croat-held west Mostar when the shooting happened.

"There was a group of Muslims visiting a cemetary in west Mostar and there was a group of Croats. The crowd initially threw stones and then opened fire," he said.

"We have reports of four casualties," he added.

Mostar, a city divided between Muslims and Croats, has been reported by aid workers to be tense after 15 explosions in the past week.

(AFP)

Bosnian Official Denies Allegations Against Iran, Bosnia

TEHRAN — A top aide to the Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic has dismissed allegations that former Bosnian Deputy Defense Minister Hassan Cengic had set up a spy service influenced by Iran.

The Persian program of Radio France said in its report Friday night that Cengic was sacked last November under U.S. pressure due to his close ties with the Islamic Republic.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Cengic was setting up an espionage service heavily influenced by the Islamic Republic.

Meanwhile, a U.S. State Department spokesman said that Washington has no evidence proving the latest claim.

(IRNA)

Azeri Speaker Congratulates Nateq Nouri on Bahman 22

BAKU — Chairman of the Majlis Melli of the Republic of Azerbaijan Morteza Ali Askarov sent a congratulatory message to his Iranian counterpart Hojjatoleslam Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri on Saturday on the 18th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

In his message Askarov emphasized the importance of parliamentary relations between the two countries:

(IRNA)

(Contd From Pg. 1)

MILLIONS...

make every effort to disseminate Islamic values, resist the global arrogance and extend their all-out support for all Islamic movements across the world, especially the Palestinian Islamic revolution. The first point also said that the Iranian nation condemns the so-called Mideast peace process, which is aimed at legitimizing the Zionist usurper regime.

"While supporting the rightful struggle of the Palestinian and Lebanese Muslims against the Zionist aggressors, we denounce the provocative measures of the Zionist regime in Bait-ul-Moqaddass, its desecration of the holy sites and torture of the Muslim people and consider null and void the so-called peace talks in the Middle East and any compromise and negotiations with the Zionist regime aimed at undermining the movement for the liberation of Qods and c[illegible]ating the domination of Zionism over the region," the second point noted. It added that pinning hopes on the arrogant powers is a repetition of previous historic mistakes and that Qods can be liberated only through the armed struggle of the anti-Zionist front against the Zionist regime.

The third point of the resolution emphasized that the vigilant Iranian nation regards the criminal United States as the source of all decadence and corruption and the mastermind behind all evil schemes and plots hatched against the Islamic nations and patron-in-chief of the Zionist usurper regime. "The Iranian people condemn the futile U.S. attempts at weakening the Islamic movements, its economic sanctions and allocation of funds for conducting subversive activities in Iran and its presence in the Persian Gulf and warn that they are, under any circumstances, prepared to defend themselves and endanger the interests of the United States," it added.

"We consider the taking of a firm stand against the so-called peace process a duty of all countries and organizations claiming to defend the rights of the Palestinians and call on the Iranian government to spare no effort to support the rightful struggle of the oppressed Palestinian nation and mobilize the Islamic countries and freedom-lovers across the world to uproot the racist Zionism and vindicate the rights of the Palestinian and Lebanese people, who are the main victims of the Zionist savage aggressions," the fourth point stressed.

The fifth point of the resolution went on to denounce the contented silence of the so-called human rights organizations in the face of the heinous crimes committed by the Qods occupiers and carnage and torture of the defenseless Muslims. "We urge the committed Islamic and international organizations and circles and the world public opinion to try their utmost to defend the rights of the oppressed nations, condemn the pogrom and torture of the Palestinians in the occupied territories and vindicate the rights of the Muslim people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Tajikistan, Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya and other parts of the world," it added.

The sixth point of the resolution denounced the enemies' plots aimed at creating rifts among Muslim nations, viewed Palestine and Bait-ul-Moqaddass as belonging to all Muslims and called for more unity and solidarity among Muslims. It further condemned the intervention of global arrogance and the international Zionism in Afghanistan and their contribution to the fratricidal war in that country. The resolution concluded by warning the United States against threatening the security of the Muslim nations and interfering in their internal affairs.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

PRESIDENT...

Among the projects, the president will inaugurate Qadir branch of Nour cultural complex, Refah chain store, two-way Salafchekan-Qom highway, water treatment company and several other projects.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

U.S. ...

Reports said the disclosure could refuel anti-U.S. anger in Okinawa, which is base for about 28,000 of the 47,000 U.S. troops based in Japan, and where there have been a series of anti-U.S. demonstrations since the rape of a 12-year-old girl by three U.S. servicemen in September 1995.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told reporters: "the problem is not the use of depleted uranium but a delay in information."

Tokyo was only notified in mid-January this year of the drill accident. It was not immediately known, why there was a delay.

Vice Foreign Minister Sadayuki Hayashi said the whole incident was "extremely regrettable." He told a news conference: "We will conduct our own research and consider whether we need to collect the remaining bullets."

Marine AV-8B carrier jets dropped the armor piercing bullets containing depleted uranium on the inhabited islet of Tori some 100 kilometers (62 miles) northwest of Okinawa, the government said in a statement.

The United States said in a report submitted to the Japanese government that the accident occurred because the bullets had been labelled "inappropriately."

A U.S. expert team has so far collected 192 bullets of them near the site, but said there were no health fears or environmental risk, the statement added.

The depleted uranium ammunition is classified as conventional weaponry, not nuclear arms. But the United States has promised not to use the weapon in military exercises in Japan as the material is radioactive.

(Contd From Pg. 1)

ISLAMIC...

The president also noted that there are few revolutions in which people like the people in the Islamic Iran are completely satisfied with the outcome of their revolution, declaring their heartfelt support even after so many years. He noted that the word "Islamic Republic" distinguishes the Islamic Revolution from other revolutions and that Islam was the main factor in motivating the Iranian people to rise against the tyrannical monarchy.

Regarding the people's status, the president said that, today, the society is enjoying the blessings of Islamization, morality and faith, adding that the freedom in Iran has no parallel.

Referring to people's active participation in the parliamentary, presidential and the assembly of experts' elections, the president said that, today, people cast their votes freely and elect their favorite candidates. As to the freedom of press, Rafsanjani noted that few countries in the world can match Iran at freedom of press.

On the achievements of the Islamic Revolution, the president said that a large number of development projects have so far been implemented in rural areas and that schools have been built even in the remotest villages, which assures the people of social justice.

"All over the country, gas, oil, mining, agriculture, power, communications, educational and industrial projects are under way and some 250 industrial townships have been built across the country. Those who were formerly unhappy with the backwardness of the country are now happy and satisfied," said the president. President Rafsanjani concluded by saying, "The people can see all these achievements and the foreign propaganda campaign against the Islamic Republic of Iran is of no avail."

Millions of people crowded into the streets in various provincial cities yesterday to mark the anniversary of the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The demonstrators comprising people of various walks of life, chanted slogans in support of the Founder of the Islamic Republic, Imam Khomeini, and the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

They also renewed their allegiance to Ayatollah Khamenei and the exalted ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

The demonstrators carried placards with slogans depicting their hatred towards the U.S. plots and the usurper regime of Qods.

Huge masses of people thronged into the streets of the Iranian capital from different directions to march to Tehran's Azadi Square to take part in the 22nd Bahman Rally.

The demonstrators were carrying pictures of the Founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei and chanting slogans in support of the Islamic Revolution and the officials.

A group of parachutists landed at the Azadi Square at 10:00 am to the cheers of the enthusiastic crowd.

Meanwhile, a helicopter of the Army Aviation Organization (Havaniruz) dropped leaflets containing remarks of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution and President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani over Azadi Square.

Revolutionary songs echo at Azadi Square bringing to life the atmosphere of the day when the revolution became victorious.

Head of the Martyr's Foundation Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Hassan Rahimiyan who was among participants in the rally told IRNA that by presenting more than 200,000 martyrs to safeguard the ideals of the Islamic Republic system and the territorial integrity of the country, the Iranian nation proved that they will not give in to humiliation under any conditions and will maintain their vigilance and obey the orders of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

Tens of foreign reporters and photographers were at Azadi Square to cover the rally.

Oil Minister Gholamareza Aqazadeh told IRNA that people's turnout at the rally indicates their satisfaction with the Islamic Revolution and system.

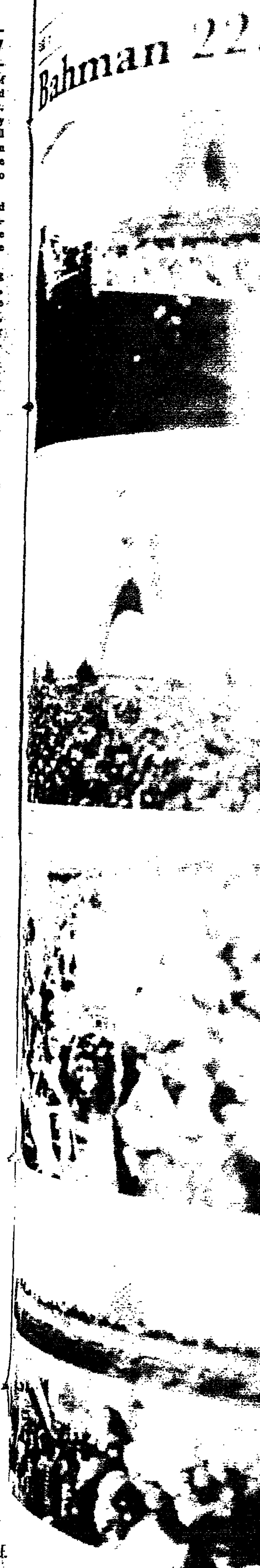
Aqazadeh added that the Iranian nation foiled the conspiracies hatched by enemies of the Islamic Revolution through their presence at all scenes.

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MAJOR...

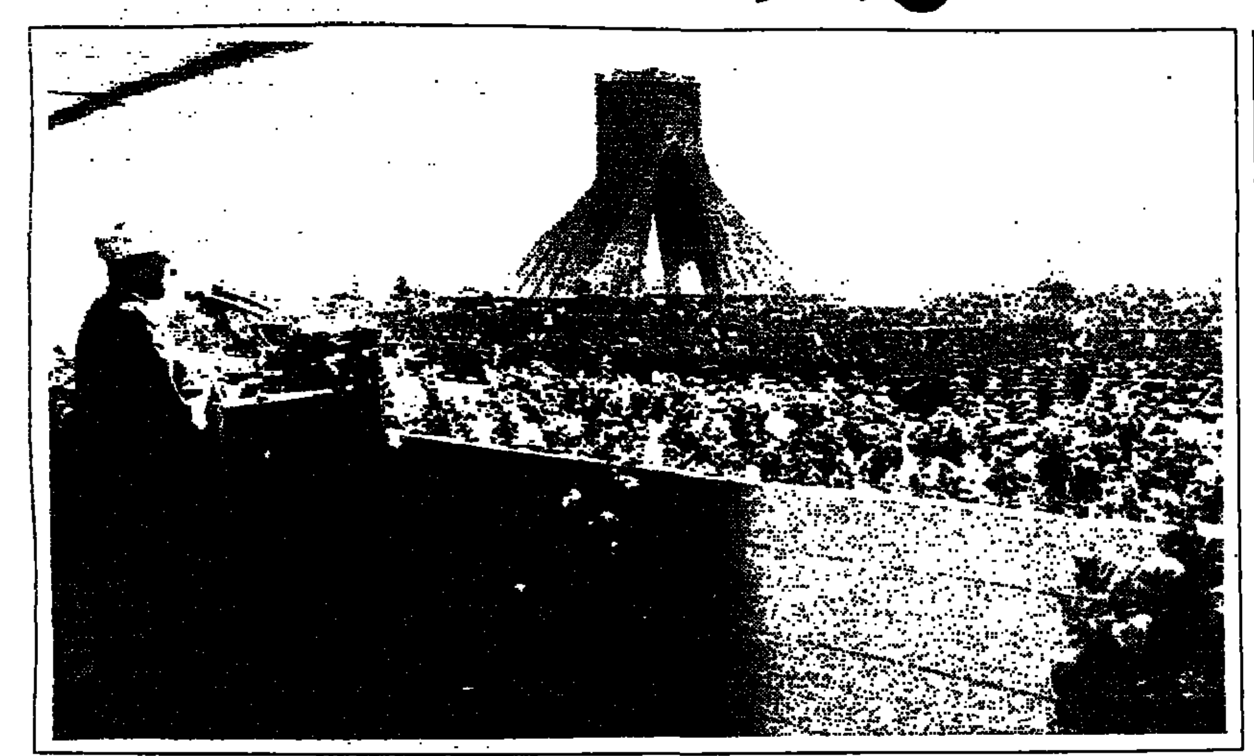
Clarke (minus 10 percent), hardline Home Secretary Michael Howard (minus 25 percent), Health Minister Stephen Dorrell (minus 26 percent), and leading Eurosceptics John Redwood (minus 29 percent) and Defense Minister Michael Portillo (minus 34 percent).

A general election must be held before May, but the Conservatives are trailing badly behind the opposition Labour Party. *(AFP)*

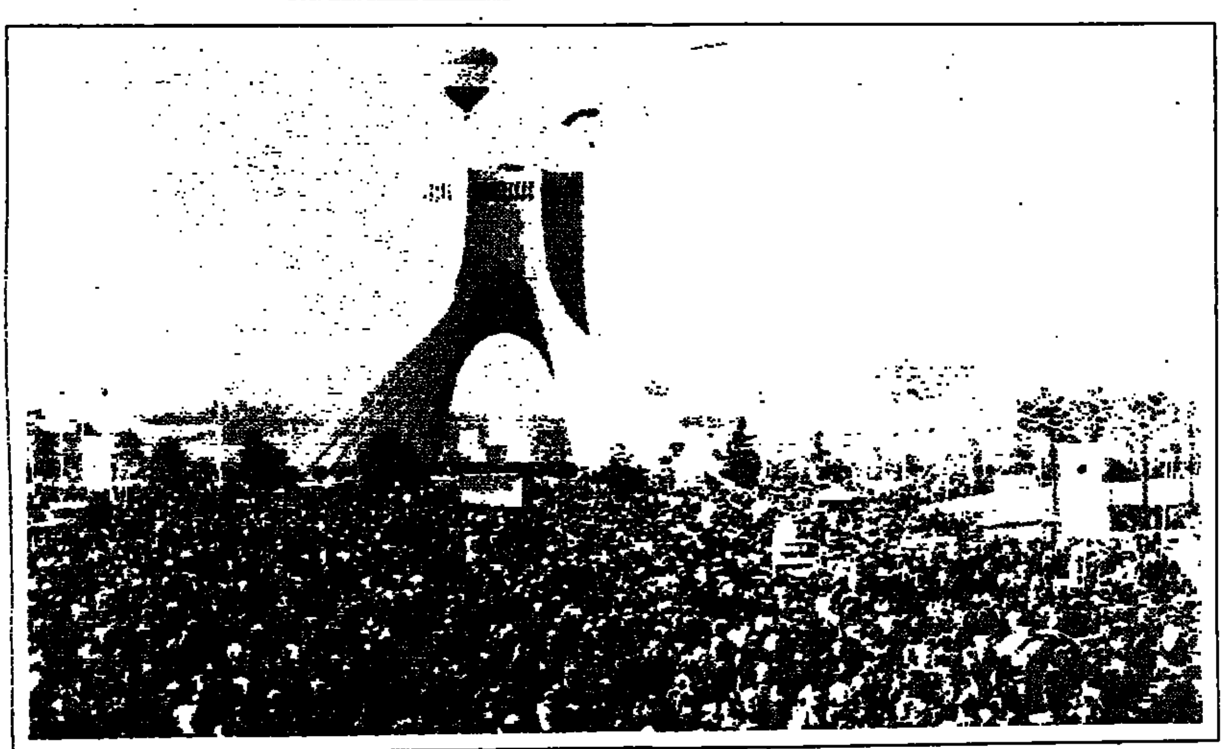


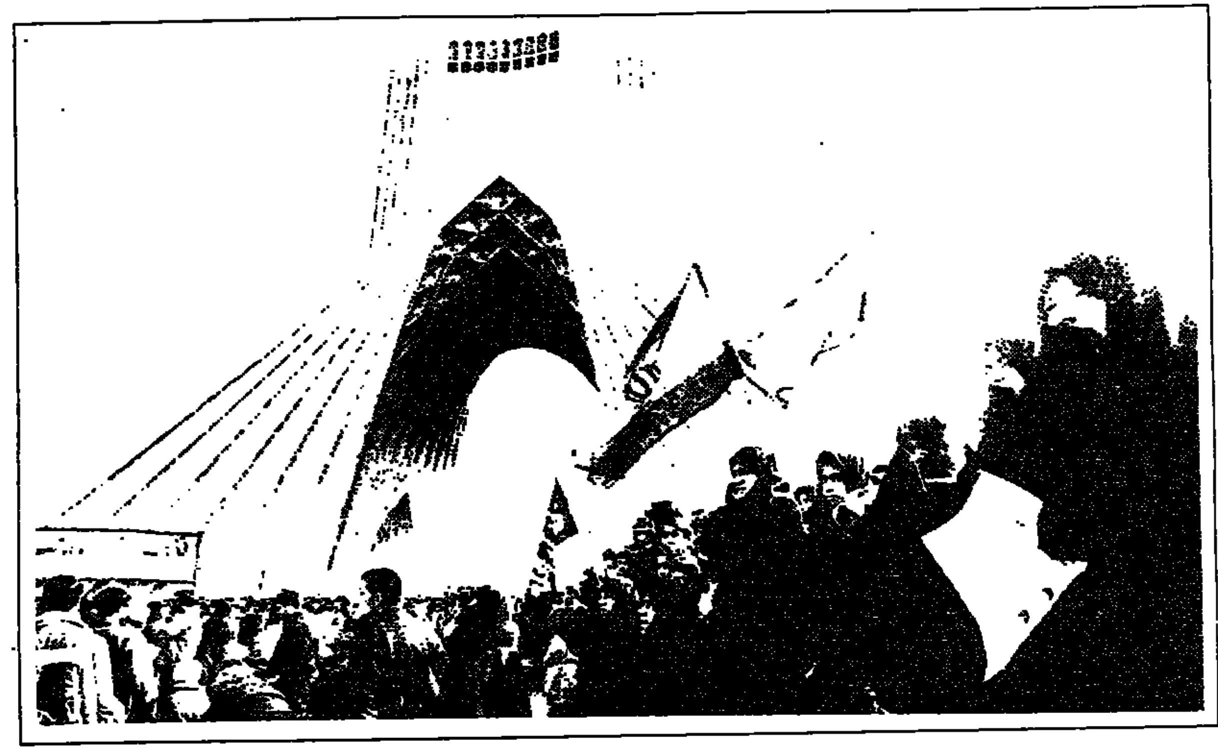
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Bahman 22, Qods Day Rallies in Photo



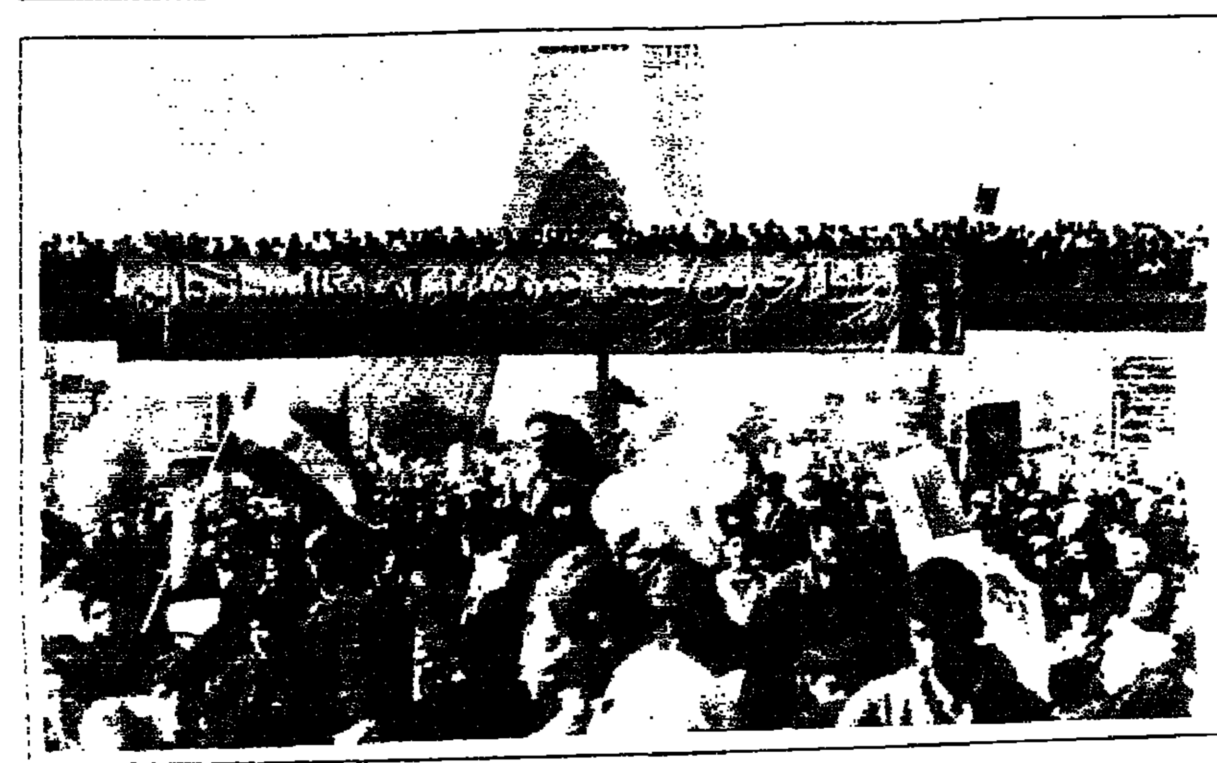














Photos by Mojtaba Takin &Abbas Kowsari

Finnish Man Fined $2,000 for Cruelty to Turtle

HELSINKI – A Finnish court fined a man 10,000 marks ($2,000) for causing the death of a pregnant turtle after he stole her from a restaurant aquarium and paraded her in the streets in icy temperatures.

The daily Helsingin Sanomat reported that the man and two drinking companions stole the turtle named Donna from a restaurant in the southwestern city of Pori.

After transiting through a bar and being walked through the streets in minus 30 degrees Celsius (minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit), the shivering animal finally had to be put to sleep. (AFP)

Italy Allows Prisoners to Keep Pets

ROME – Italian prisoners are to be allowed to keep pets in their cells. Cats, fish and caged birds are examples of the small pets they can have to help alleviate boredom and loneliness, Justice Ministry officials said.

Greens Party Senator Athos de Luca said he had proposed the pets program as a way to help humanize penal institutions.

Fulco Pratesi, President of Italy's Chapter of the World Wildlife Fund, said: Inmates have a great need for contact with nature and this contact helps speed their social recovery. (Reuter)

Sri Lanka Air Force Attacks Cuban Ship

COLOMBO – The Sri Lankan Air Force destroyed a Tamil guerrilla boat and attacked a Cuban-owned ship in international waters wrongly believing it was unloading weapons, officials said Monday.

Air Force Puccara bombers sank the small boat believed to belong to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) off the strategic northeastern port district of Trincomalee overnight Sunday, officials said.

"The Tiger boat movement was detected by reconnaissance planes and the Puccaras were called in to engage it," a defense official here said adding that the attack on the Cuban ship, the MV Caribbean Queen, was a mistake.

He said the Cuban vessel was spotted 22 nautical miles off the Sri Lanka coast and within international waters with its engines shut down but the pilots of the reconnaissance plane made contact with the ship to establish its identity.

However, due to some confusion, Puccara bombers which were called into the area had hit the ship and caused serious damage to the super structure and the engine room of the vessel, officials said.

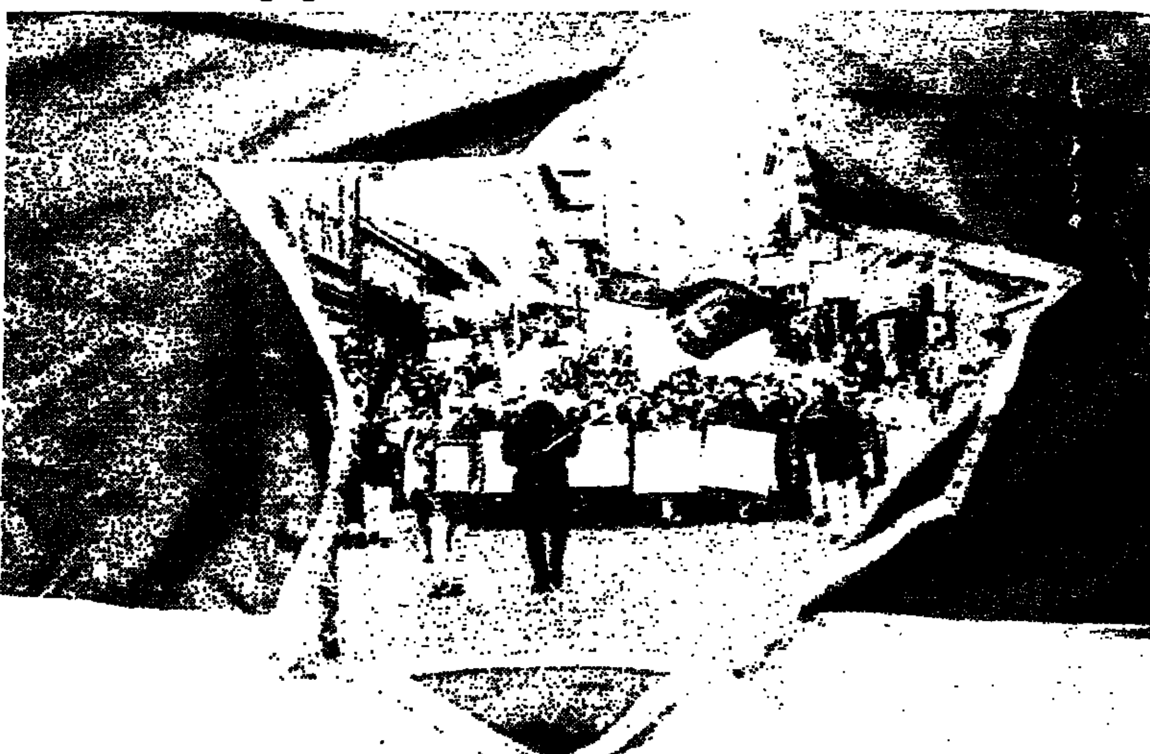
Defense officials said that the navy had sent half a dozen gun boats to help the Cuban ship put out a fire and bring it to the port of Trincomalee on Monday.

The Cyprus-registered Caribbean Queen, manned by a 28-member all Cuban crew, had unloaded a cargo of sulphur at the Indian port of Calcutta and was on its way for bunkering at Colombo.

No one was hurt in the air force attack, officials said.

On Sunday, the navy sank two boats of the LTTE of the island's northwestern coast, killing or wounding 20 suspected rebels. (AFP)

Serbian Parliamentary Panel Rejects Opposition Amendment



BELGRADE, Serbia, Yugoslavia (Feb. 5): View of a demonstration by students in Belgrade, seen through the cut-out star of a Serbian flag. Serbian pro-democracy demonstrators geared up for more rallies on February 5, despite an apparent backing down by President Slobodan Milosevic in his marathon conflict with the opposition. (AFP PHOTO)

BELGRADE – A Serbian parliamentary commission Monday refused to attach an amendment proposed by the opposition to a bill reinstating opposition elections wins, the Tanjug news agency said.

This amendment sought for the bill to include two districts of Belgrade where the opposition said it was robbed of victory in the municipal elections held November 17.

The parliamentary legal commission did not give a reason for its ruling, the agency said.

The two districts are not among eight that a Western fact-finding team said were won fairly by the opposition and which are covered in the legislative bill.

But the Serbian panel did accept another amendment from the opposition. This one sought to remove language in the bill which said all the victories being restored in the text, including 14 cities, were based on "provisional results."

The opposition dropped plans to propose a third amendment linked to the second one.

The legal commission is controlled by the ruling Socialist Party and an allied party.

Earlier a spokesman for the opposition Serbian Renewal Movement said the vote on the bill, originally due Tuesday, may be delayed because of a packed legislative agenda. (AFP)

Sikhs Ride to Sweeping Victory in India's Punjab

CHANDIGARH, India – A Sikh party was poised on Monday to rule India's Punjab state for the next five years after a landslide victory in the farming region's first peaceful elections in nearly two decades.

The Akali Dal, led by former Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal, and its ally the rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won an overwhelming four-fifths of the 117 seats in the State Legislature.

The Hindus dominate the cities. The BJP is their major mouthpiece. Sikhs dominate the countryside. The combination is formidable, said Ashis Nandy, an analyst at the center for the Study of Developing Societies in New Delhi.

It was a significant win for the Sikh Party, which won a dominant 74 seats after boycotting the last Punjab elections in 1992. The state's ruling Congress Party was reduced to a humiliating also-ran with only 14 seats. (Reuter)

Car Bomb Kills One, Injures Seven in Spain

MADRID -- One person was killed and seven were injured in a car bomb explosion close to a military base in the southern Spanish city of Granada on Monday, police said.

The Interior Ministry said the explosion was likely to have been a guerrilla attack by Basque separatist group ETA.

Everything is very confused at the moment as it usually is after a terrorist attack but sadly we can confirm there is one person dead, State Secretary for the Interior Ricardo Marti told local radio.

Police said the blast occurred on a road leading to a military base, about two km (one mile) from the city center, at around 0615 GMT.

The victim was a hairdresser travelling in a military van to Granada's Armilla Military Airbase, the Interior Ministry said. Of the seven injured, police said three had been seriously hurt.

Police said the explosion had been huge, breaking windows in a wide area and seriously damaging a nearby building up to the fourth floor.

Meanwhile, a leader of the Basque Nationalist Party Herri Batasuna was found dead by his family in the northern town of Mallabia, a party official said.

The official said Eugenio Aramburu was found hanged at a house owned by the leader of the Nationalist Party. It was unclear whether he committed suicide.

According to another report, a magistrate at the Spanish Supreme Court was killed by an unidentified gunman in a street here Monday, emergency services said.

Rafael Martinez Emperador died in hospital after he was shot in the head. (Reuter)

New President Takes Oath in Ecuador, but Confusion Remains

QUITO -- Ecuadorans finally knew who their president was Sunday after a three-day power struggle, but confusion remained over how long the new leader would serve and who had the authority to select the head of state.

Rosalia Arteaga, who had been vice president, was sworn in as Ecuador's first woman president for a "strictly limited period," ending three days of chaos during which three different people said they ran the country. But doubts remained over a scheduled vote by Congress Tuesday to select a president to serve until August 1998, when new elections would be called.

While Arteaga was named interim president by winning the votes of 45 of 46 legislators present during a pre-dawn session Sunday — and by receiving the military's support — some observers said aspirants to the more permanent job would need votes from two-thirds of Congress, or 55 of its 82 members.

If lawmakers fail to reach a consensus, it would likely extend Arteaga's stint in the job.

The crisis began Thursday, when Congress ousted President Abdala Bucaram, saying the eccentric leader was mentally incapable of the job. (AFP)



QUITO, Ecuador (Feb 5): Ecuadoran demonstrators break through a plice cordon in an attempt to reach the presidential palace in Quito, as massive protests calling for the resignation of President Abdala Bucaram continue. Bucaram, 45, was sealed off in a government office surrounded by police and riot vehicles on the first of two days of strikes and protests. (AFP PHOTO)

Fujimori Says No Ransom Money Available

LONDON – Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori said on Monday that there was no chance of ransom money being paid to Marxist guerrillas holding 72 hostages in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

But he said during a visit to London he was still hopeful that preliminary talks starting on Tuesday could lead to a peaceful solution of the 54-day-old siege.

As a government we don't accept this kind of ransom payment. I think that all governments, not just the Peruvian but around the world, must not accept these kind of crimes and later pay a ransom, Fujimori told BBC radio.

(Reuter)

More Than 100 Hurt in Worst Albania Clash So Far

TIRANA – More than 100 people were injured Monday in the southern Albanian port town of Vlore amid clashes between demonstrators and police, hospital officials said, giving a revised toll.

It was by far the worst violence in Albania since protesters took to the streets to accuse the government of collusion in the collapse of pyramid investments schemes that had robbed many Albanians of their savings.

Earlier it had been reported that more than 50 people had been hurt.

Shots rang out and demonstrators and police threw rocks and stones at each other as some 10,000 people marched through the streets of Vlore to protest the collapse of a bogus savings scheme last Tuesday, a witness said. (AFP)

Huge IRA Bomb Found as Sinn Fein Demands Meeting With London

BELFAST – Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, on Monday stepped up calls for a meeting with the British government after a huge IRA bomb was found south of Londonderry.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary said the 500 kilogram (1,000 pound) bomb was found on a building site near Strabane, County Tyrone, after a coded telephone warning from the IRA late Sunday saying the device had been abandoned. (AFP)



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Kuwait's
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Kuwait's Slow Privatization

KUWAIT — Higher oil prices could slow Kuwait's privatization program and strengthen opposition to the plan to sell off basic services, bankers and economists say.

A return to over-generosity by the state is starting and the urgency to move to the next phases (of privatization) could weaken, said leading Kuwaiti economist Jassem al-Saadoun.

Over the past two years the state has sold its stake in some 18 local firms for over 2 billion. It still needs to sell stakes in 36 more companies, worth some 3 billion, officials say.

It is wrong to think that high oil prices are a permanent factor. Voices even within (Persian Gulf Arab governments) started to call for reforms when prices fell (in recent years), but now there are indications of laxness, Saadoun told Reuters.

Kuwait mobilized the privatization plan because its wealth was depleted by lower world oil prices and by the huge costs of the 1991 Persian Gulf war which ended the seven-month Iraqi occupation.

Higher oil prices could raise pressure in Parliament against the privatization of utilities, said Randa Azar, chief economist at the country's largest bank, National Bank of Kuwait.

Some MPs oppose the sales because of fears of redundancies for Kuwaiti workers and of higher prices for basic services.

Persian Gulf War Sparks Privatization

Kuwait, once a major global investor, saw its nest egg of more then $100 billion shrink to around $35 billion after the war. Some experts put the value of the state's current foreign holdings at about $40 billion. Kuwaiti private citizens hold a similar amount of foreign assets.

The next stages of privatization would involve profitable service companies which do not need to impose price increases or major redundancies.

Finance Minister Nasser al-Rodhan told a seminar last month that he hoped Parliament would pass a law in 1997 to start the more complex and controversial privatization of heavily subsidized utility firms, also used as employment centers for Kuwaitis.

The government's economic policies adopt, as an essential feature, proceeding in implementing the privatization program in a serious and flexible manner, Rodhan said.

First Phase Proves Popular

Kuwait, which like other oil exporters is enjoying added revenue as oil prices average about $5 a barrel more than forecast in the budget, started to sell its stake in several local firms in 1994.

Although Kuwaiti and independent experts are full of praise for the first phase by the state's investment arm, Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), some see the moves so far as just the transfer of ownership of shares to the private sector.

To start with, the state was not supposed to have these holdings, Saadoun said. It should not be involved in providing car loans, running warehouses and managing hotels, but several reasons lead to its intervention, like the (stock market) collapse in 1982.

Azar said he expects KIA's selloffs to proceed smoothly over the next six months. The program has been very positive for the market and broadened it as there is a lot of liquidity.

Experts say Kuwaitis had limited domestic investment vehicles to absorb their oil wealth. Now the country's stock exchange is a popular vehicle with the index rising 40 percent in 1996 when most of the shares offered by the state were oversubscribed.

Only Persian Gulf Arab nationals can trade on the Kuwait stock exchange but officials say foreigners would eventually be allowed to participate, a key measure according to the World Bank.

Public services needs new rules KIA's director general Ali al-Bauer says moving to the essential stage of privatizing public utilities requires a fundamental development in regulations.

The employment issue and price of (strategic) services is the main obstacle facing the next privatization stages, said Azar. There is public resistance although there is awareness for the need to move on. A good thing about Kuwait is the freedom of speech to discuss these issues in the press.

Experts say the government could implement several measures to dampen the impact on employment and prices of privatizing basic services like water, electricity and health.

But too many restrictions could make these firms less attractive, said Azar. However, ... subsidizing the privatization would be less costly in the long run than the current subsidies.

Experts say more than 90 percent of the Kuwaiti work force is hired by the state which spends about half of its oil revenue on salaries of 1.25 billion dinars ($4.18 billion) in the welfare state of 700,000 citizens.

Cash Grants May Cushion Price Rises

Saadoun said the state could privatize services but grant citizens cash to cushion the rise in prices which would follow.

Kuwaitis are among the world's largest consumers of power.

You pay two fils per kilowatt-hour while it costs the state 17, he added. Directly giving Kuwaiti consumers the subsidy could lead to a drop in consumption and a cut in capital expenditure on new power plants.

He says the state could also tackle the sticky issue of employment by offering to pay part of the salaries of Kuwaitis employed by privatized strategic services firms on a decreasing annual scale over several years.

Some experts say masked unemployment is as high as 50 percent.

But many say the move towards privatizing most of the state's holdings is inevitable although the state would continue to control strategic areas within the vital oil sector for years to come.

(Reuter)

G7 Set to Meet on Russian Nuclear Security

WASHINGTON — A working unit of the G7 industrialized countries meets here this week to discuss Russian nuclear issues including the deadly Chernobyl reactor in the Ukraine.

On Monday and Tuesday it will review work that must be done at the Chernobyl site, the U.S. State Department said. Yuri Kostenko, Ukrainian Minister for Ecology and Nuclear Safety, will attend the second day of talks.

On Wednesday, discussions will turn to the broader theme of nuclear safety in Russia.

High on the agenda will be how to improve the "sarcophagus" containing the remains of a nuclear reactor at the Chernobyl plant that exploded in 1986.

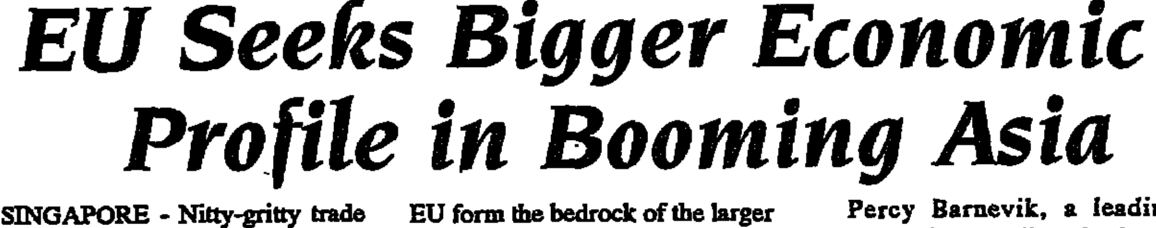
In December, representatives of the Group of Seven said they would pay to reinforce Chernobyl's nuclear grave in the near future.

(AFP)



File photo showing 3 top Soviet officials on trial on charges of criminal negligence in connection with the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant disaster.

(AP-AA Wirephoto)



EU Seeks Bigger Economic Profile in Booming Asia

SINGAPORE - Nitty-gritty trade and investment issues will not be forgotten despite lingering political disputes at this week's meetings here between foreign ministers of the European union (EU) and Asia, analysts say.

A meeting of the Southeast Asian Nations, (ASEAN) and the EU, which will be followed by broader talks involving China, Japan and South Korea, come amid attempts by Europe to raise its economic profile in Asia and catch up with Japan and the united states in reaping profits from the booming region.

ASEAN, whose ties with the EU form the bedrock of the larger Asia-Europe meeting known as ASEM, wants the talks to focus on economic rather than sensitive political issues.

"The objectives of ASEM include politics, economics -- everything, but ASEM just started less than one year ago so we should emphasize economics," Thai senior official Saroj Chavanaviraj said last week.

Touchy topics include East Timor, a former Portuguese colony seized by Indonesia in the mid-1970s, and Burma, a future ASEAN member whose military junta has been accused of widespread human rights abuses.

"The EU often takes positions..... which are politically motivated," a French industry executive in Singapore said. "I am not saying they are wrong positions but the perception is that Europe is an antagonist." "But even if there should be a clash or incident, I don't see what really would be the consequence. I think they will agree to disagree, show some unhappiness and get on with the job (of increasing economic ties)," he said.

The ASEAN and EU ministers, who will start meeting on Thursday, will be joined on Saturday by counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea to lay the groundwork for the second summit of their leaders in London in 1998.

A "trade facilitation" plan to slash trade barriers is expected to be approved at the ASEM talks here.

Inter-continental trade and investments have been growing but analysts say the EU still has a long way to go before it matches the regional presence of its traditional rivals in trade and investments.

"If you look at the size of Europe as an economic entity and the size of its presence in Asia, it is far behind Japan and America," said Graham Hayward, executive director of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.

Percy Barnevik, a leading European industrialist who heads an EU advisory group, lamented recently in Brussels that Europe had "an embarrassingly small participation in fast-growing Asia."

The group said in a report that one reason for the EU's declining share of world trade was its small share of exports to ASEAN, which groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Figures released in Singapore showed that ASEAN's total trade with the EU reached $99.5 billion in 1995, jumping from $75.5 billion the previous year. The EU had a $6.25 billion surplus in 1995.

But the EU's combined 15 member economies still lagged third behind Japan and the united states in ASEAN's list of trading partners.

Japan-ASEAN trade in 1995 totalled $134.19 billion, up from $100.13 billion, with Japan boasting a hefty surplus of $41.07 billion.

US-ASEAN trade in 1995 totalled almost $110 billion, with ASEAN enjoying a surplus of $11 billion.

The EU also trails far behind Japan and the united states in foreign direct investments in Asia which total in excess of $250 billion. But European companies are determined to catch up.

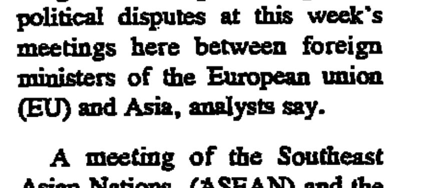
Auto-maker Volkswagen of Germany has become the largest foreign investor in China, Asia's largest market.

European industrialists also hope Asia's potential will help offset sluggish growth back home.

"The markets in Europe are at best only marginally growing," the French industry executive said. "So now they have realized they need a presence here.

"The future can only be good. You have big markets, big populations hard-working people, high levels of savings, so these are very good markets — this quality is now completely recognized in Europe."

(AFP)



Japan, Russia Reach Agreement on Oil Spill Probe

TOKYO — Japan and Russia have agreed on details of a joint probe into the cause of a Russian oil spill which has devastated coastal areas in the Sea of Japan, Transport Minister Makoto Koga said Monday.

Koga said the two countries, which have been at odds over the cause of a Russian tanker sinking on January 2, achieved "mostly satisfactory" results during three days of talks in Moscow last week.

"We will soon discuss how to examine the bow," he told a news conference. "Russia hopes to join the probe once it is brought to land." The bow of the tanker has been stranded off the town of Mikuni for several weeks and is believed to contain more than 1,000 tons of oil. Work to drain the structure had almost been completed by Monday morning, officials said.

Tokyo has rejected Moscow's claim that the tanker broke apart and sank after colliding with an unidentified object, arguing instead that the ship was simply too old. The tanker was transporting oil from China to Russia when it fell into difficulties during a heavy storm.

(AFP)

Who's a Real Indian? Tribes Find Conflict in Self-Definition



SEATTLE – With his blue eyes and sandy blond hair, Richard Snelding hardly resembles the classic American Indian of Hollywood films and history books. But he may be the Indian face of the future.

Snelding has one-sixty-fourth Kaw blood – enough for membership in Oklahoma's Kaw nation tribe, if not for complete acceptance from Indian friends who call him "Casper" and "Wonder Bread".

There's more to being an Indian than a pedigree, the 22- year-old says: "What you feel inside of you is what's important."

He doesn't have to look far for an argument. With gambling profits raising the stakes of tribal membership, deciding who is a "real" Indian has become one of the most divisive issues facing American Indians today.

Never mind the new age pretenders who claim kinship to a Cherokee princess they saw in a dream. More nettlesome for the United States' 554 federally recognized tribes is what to do with their own sons and daughters.

Often, their Indian ancestry is unquestioned, but generations of intermarriage have crowded their family trees with non- Indians as well.

Many tribes are easing membership requirements just to survive, prompting worries that tribal traditions will fade along with blood levels.

"If tribes aren't careful, they can turn into big business corporations that say to hell with culture," said Jerry Bread, a professor of native American studies at the University of Oklahoma. "I'd like to see the physical traits of American Indians remain, but it's not happening."

One federal study estimated that the percentage of Indians who are full-blooded – 60 percent in 1980 – will fall to 34 percent by 2000 and to 0.3 percent by 2080.

But even as bloodlines thin, being Indian has never been so popular. The number of people identifying themselves as American Indian has nearly tripled since 1970, rising from 827,000 to more than 2.2 million, census figures show.

A renaissance of Indian pride is partly responsible. So is an upturn in the fortunes of some tribes, notably those involved in gambling.

In Connecticut, the 383 members of the Mashantucket Pequot tribe share profits from a casino that clears more than $1 million a day from slot machines alone.

The tribe gets about 50 calls a month from people who figure they must have Pequot blood in them. "Some of them can't even pronounce the name of the tribe," tribal spokesman Bruce McDonald said.

It's easy to brush off such people. But when the Pequots looked at their own families, they realized many of their children and grandchildren wouldn't qualify for membership.

In November, the tribe dropped its eligibility requirement of one-sixteenth Pequot blood. Applicants now must prove only that they are descended from someone listed on the tribal census rolls of 1900 or 1910.

It was a quiet resolution compared to bitter membership feuds dividing tribes from the Maliseets of Maine to the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux of Minnesota.

At Michigan's Keweenaw Bay Indian community, dissidents have occupied the tribe's barricaded headquarters since August 1995. Saying the tribe has strayed from its cultural roots, the dissidents claim tribal leaders have lined their pockets with casino profits and stripped the voting rights of those who challenge them. The leaders, replying that many of the dissidents have dubious claims of membership, set up new offices in the casino.

Even without big money complicating things, a decision to relax membership requirements can prompt soul-searching. Oklahoma's Fort Sill Apache, a tribe of 379 members descended from Geronimo's band, looked into the future and saw its own demise.

"Everybody was saying that before long, we're just not going to have any people left," tribal chairwoman Ruey Darrow said. The tribe voted in November to reduce the level of Fort Sill Apache blood needed for tribal membership from one-eighth to one-sixteenth.

"If tribes aren't careful, they can turn into big business corporations that say to hell with culture. I'd like to see the physical traits of American Indians remain, but it's not happening."

"If we're stark white, we're still going to be Apache," said Darrow, 70. "It's not so much blood as it is you know who you are, and you feel in your heart and your spirit that you belong to this group."



Some tribes still toe a hard line on membership. The Miccosukees of Florida, for example, require one-half Indian blood. But more are heading the way of the Cherokee nation, which has no blood requirement and which, since 1987, has more than doubled its membership to 182,000.

Outsiders who fret about Indian purity should remember that tribes are political entities with a federally recognized right to govern themselves, said Daniel Wildcat, a professor at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas.

"We would be incensed if Canada or Mexico tried to tell the United States who its citizens should be," Wildcat said. "If tribal sovereignty means anything, it means the right of a nation to determine who its members are."

Of course, legal membership doesn't guarantee social acceptance. In some tribes, light-skinned members aren't invited to sacred ceremonies, said Bread, the University of Oklahoma professor. Some parents tell their children they'll disown them if they marry outside the tribe, even to other Indians.

But such purists are bucking the trend. With half of all Indians living off reservations – land set aside by the U.S. government for Indian use – continued intermarriage is likely.

Snelding, the blue-eyed Kaw, has a white father and a mother who is one-eighth mixed Indian, including Kaw. He was raised a Mormon and has lived in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Louisiana and Florida – but never on a reservation.

He qualifies for membership in the Kaw nation because the tribe stopped looking at blood levels years ago, now requiring only proof of descent from a 1902 tribal roll. Among the tribe's 2,186 members, the only full-blooded Kaws left are two old men.

"It's a pretty scary thing when you think about it," Snelding said. "It's a passing on of a whole nation, a whole culture."

Snelding is a student at Haskell, a melting pot for Indians from around the nation. His fair skin makes him stand out there, though not as much as it once would have.

Snelding said tolerance outweighs discrimination on campus. He was elected student senate president last spring, which he took as a sign that Haskell students are more tuned in than most Americans about what it means to be Indian.

"There are two stereotypes in this country," he said. "One is you're an honorable Indian like something out of 'Dances with Wolves'. The other is you're a drunken Indian on the reservation. There aren't a lot of images in between." *(AP)*

Stillness Falls Over New Zealand Town in Wake of Mass Murders

RAURIMU, New Zealand – A stillness fell over Raurimu on Monday, one lifeless flag hanging at half-mast the only outward sign that this peaceful little New Zealand community has been shattered by a mass killing.

Mist and light rain blanketed deserted streets in the rural North Island settlement as behind closed doors, local residents tried to cope with a horrific shotgun massacre on Saturday that left six people dead and six others wounded.

Some people have left, said Gordon Stewart, who first raised the alarm that a murderer was on a rampage in the hamlet, nestled in hills under the majestic volcano Mount Ruapehu.

"They've decided it's a good idea to get away from here for a while," he said.

On Saturday Raurimu resembled a war zone, with armed police, ambulances and helicopters swarming all over the area.

A 22-year-old man was arrested naked a few hours after the slayings on Saturday morning and has been charged with the murder of one of the victims, local man Hendrick van de Wetering, 51.

Police said more charges are likely to follow.

Stephen Anderson of Wellington showed no emotion as he appeared in Taumarunui District Court, 34 km (21 miles) from Raurimu, on Sunday. He was remanded in custody to appear in Hamilton District Court on Wednesday.

A psychiatric report was ordered. New Zealand health authorities have said Anderson was a mental health patient, and family friends said he was diagnosed as schizophrenic last year.

His father, Neville Anderson, was among those killed. His mother, Helen Anderson, was reported to have been one of six of a gathering of 18 friends and family who escaped unharmed.

The murders occurred in and near Raurimu lodge, built by Neville Anderson. Friends and family had come from Wellington, four hours south of Raurimu by car, for a weekend retreat.

A police cordon is still in force around the 200-meter radius area in which the bodies were strewn.

Simple flowers on a roadside fencepost paid tribute to Hank van de Wetering close to where he was killed. The gunman had moved from the Raurimu lodge onto Van de Wetering's neighboring property, blasting indiscriminately with a shotgun.

Raurimu residents mourning the loss of their friend said Van de Wetering had saved his daughter's life by diving in front of her as the killer fired.

Plans for a church service were delayed because several of the bodies had yet to be released by police. Inspector Jeff Holloway said three bodies remained where they fell at the murder scene as police continued their forensic examinations. It was hoped that they would be removed later on Monday, he said.

(Reuter)

Four Decapitated Heads Found

NEW DELHI – Police recovered four decapitated heads wrapped in clothes from a car after a traffic accident near the Indian capital, the *Hindustan Times* reported Monday.

Police officer Jaiprakash Yadav made the startling discovery when he searched the car abandoned by its occupants after it skidded on a highway in Bulandshahr town Saturday, the daily said.

The discovery brought a large crowd to the spot, forcing the police to call in reinforcements. The police have launched a hunt to track down the killers, the *Times* said. *(AFP)*

British Airways Offers Concorde Flights $16

LONDON – The first 200 callers to British Airways reservation office later Monday can win a return ticket to New York aboard the supersonic Concorde for just £10 ($16), the airline announced.

Would-be winners can ring from anywhere in the world, but from the stroke of 2200 GMT, British Airways said. Tickets will be issued on a first come, first served basis.

The promotion, which will cost the company more than £1 million, is to mark the 10th anniversary of its privatization.

British Airways will reserve 10 seats in each of its two daily Concorde flights to New York for 10 days from February 12. The return journey must be taken by March 20.

The normal cost of a return ticket on the prestige supersonic service is £5,400 ($8,600) but for BA the operation is still fairly small beer. Since privatization it has grown into one of the world's most successful airlines, announcing record half-year profits in November of £470 million.

The Concorde service is not without hiccups, however. Last Friday one of the jets was diverted to Canada with 70 passengers on board, including pop stars Elton John and Pete Townsend, after one engine failed over the Atlantic.

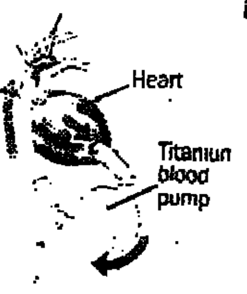
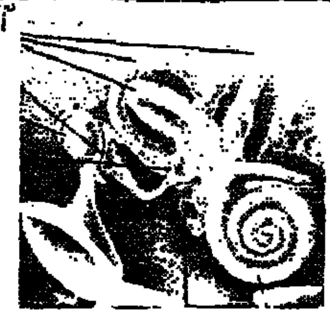
Oh, by the way, the number to call is (44) 345 222 111.

(AFP)







Success in Quitting Smoking Determined in First Day



WASHINGTON — Smokers who can stay away from cigarettes during the first day they quit smoking are more likely to kick the habit for good, an article in the *American Medical Association Journal* says.

A study led by Eric Westman at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, found "quit date abstinence improved the odds of long-term success tenfold," says the article in the February 10 issue of archives of *Internal Medicine*.

The article says an equally significant predictor is low nicotine dependence, which "increases the odds of long-term abstinence fourfold."

The study followed 207 healthy volunteers who smoked at least one pack of cigarettes a day, had generally the same basic levels of addiction and wanted to quit smoking.

After being given a nicotine patch and some brief counseling, the volunteers kept track of the number of cigarettes they smoked over the next six months.

The article says the findings suggest that a one-day test could determine whether an individual was going to be able to kick the habit over the long term.

Such a quick determination could mean "significant cost savings" if patches and therapy are withheld from people who are unable to refrain from smoking on the "quit date," the article says.

The practice could save the United States 110 million dollars a year "in futile treatment costs," the article says.

The authors of the article say, however, more study is needed to determine whether the findings apply to smokers without the volunteers' same state of good health.

(AFP)

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D2	S1	L1	I1	E1	E1	N1		RACK 1
C3	A1	O1	B3	L1	F4	I1	2nd Letter Double	RACK 2
M3	V4	V4	O1	O1	O1	R1	1st Letter Triple	RACK 3
N1	R1	A1	I1	O1	C3	R1		RACK 4

PAR SCORE 125-135

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL ____
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7- letter word from the letters in each row. To total points of your words, use scoring directions to right of each row. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words can be found in OSW Official Scrabble Words (Chambers). JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

3-3-95

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Here is the solution to yesterday's Scrabble

SCRABBLE BRAND GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD

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S1	P3	R1	I1	N1	G2	Y4	RACK 1 =	63
P3	A1	R1	T1	E1	D2		RACK 2 =	9
R1	I1	P3	T1	I1	D2	E1	RACK 3 =	80
W4	H4	A1	C3	K5			RACK 4 =	34

PAR SCORE 120-130 JUDD'S TOTAL 186

3-2-95

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Treating Speech Disorders

Our son just turned three and is stuttering quite a bit. Our pediatrician said that most children grow out of this and told us not to worry. In contrast, a friend handed us some information that said we should take our son to a speech specialist and have the problem assessed immediately. Who is right? How is stuttering treated?

-Scott M., Albany, N.Y.

Over the past ten years, experts have agreed that children who stutter see a speech pathologist who specializes in stuttering. A handful of facilities throughout the United States are recognized for their treatment of stuttering.

Experts estimate that 20 percent of all American children develop some degree of stuttering. Work by Dick Martin, researcher in stuttering at the University of Minnesota, showed that only 30 to 50 percent of these children will stop stuttering without treatment.

"New treatment programs for preschoolers who stutter are very effective, and parents should seek help when the problem appears," said Christy Ludlow, a researcher and speech pathologist at the National Institute on Deafness and other communication disorders at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md.

Stuttering is one type of speech disorder or disfluency. Speech disfluency can include disruptive behaviors such as repeating parts of words, prolonging words, pausing inappropriately, breaking words, repeating whole words, repeating phrases and interjecting words.

Studies have shown that in a normal preschool child, disfluency occurs in three to four percent of speech. In children needing treatment, disfluency occurs more than 10 percent of the time. When speech is disrupted four to 10 percent of the time, speech and hearing evaluations help speech pathologists determine whether treatment is necessary.

Clinics usually treat stuttering by teaching the child and his or her parents how to change speech practices. But no one knows just what causes stuttering, and researchers have not studied how treatment works.

For instance, researchers have observed that parents of stutterers speak faster and interrupt more often than average. But studies have not shown that these factors have a bearing on whether children stutter.

Still, clinicians continue to treat parents and their stuttering children, because they find it works. Over the past decade, a consensus has been building that pre-schoolers needing treatment should receive it promptly. "If a child is properly treated, especially before the age of six normal speech can be attained over 99 percent of the time. If you wait until after six, it gets dicey whether normal speech can ever be achieved," said Woody Starkweather, professor of speech-language-hearing at Temple University in Philadelphia.

If adults stutter, they may learn tools to deal with their problem, but the stuttering will persist. However, with treatment, "on an average, after 82-hour sessions with both parents and the child, the previously stuttering child will be speaking normally," Starkweather said. "Roughly 10 percent take a lot longer. We found this group often had been stuttering for a long period of time – about one to two years."

With such a high success rate, the question becomes who should be treated. Susan Fosnot, researcher at Children's Hospital at Los Angeles and an expert in *treating stuttering children*, evaluates each student and parent in an initial two-hour visit. Fosnot encourages and observes play, transcribes all dialog verbatim and conducts articulation and language-usage tests. After analysis, which includes seeing what percentage of the child's speech is disrupted, she recommends whether the child *should simply be observed or treated.*

(Courtesy The Hindu Newspaper)

Stopping stuttering

Experts treating stuttering children and their parents often recommend these strategies.

The parents are taught:

- Slow down your speech.
- Talk less. Experts estimate that 25 percent of stuttering may be caused by parents overstimulating the child. Inundated with information, the child can't move his or her mouth fast enough to keep up with the brain.
- Don't interrupt the child. Wait two seconds after the child stops talking before beginning to speak.
- *Teach the child not to interrupt the parents.*
- Avoid having a child speak on demand, such as reciting material or telling a long story.
- Learn to deal with excitement or anxiety.
- Don't avoid the topic. *Acknowledge that there is a problem and be* available for the child to ask questions about stuttering.

The child is taught:

- *To talk more slowly. To talk more smoothly. To blend words.*
- How to initiate a sentence or word.
- How to deal with stuttering when it occurs.
- How to take appropriate turns.
- *How to deal with pressure.*

Kenyan Government Bans Anti-AIDS "Drug"

NAIROBI — Kenyan authorities have banned the sale and use of an anti-AIDS treatment, developed by a local researcher who claimed it could cure the disease, officials said.

Arthur Obel, the developer of the drug known as pearl omega, had been selling it for 30,000 Kenyan shillings (about $550) for Kenyans, $2,500 for other East Africans, and $5,000 for those from outside the region.

Obel refused to provide authorities with the required scientific documents to support the herbal drug, which he has been dispensing during the past year.

He was roundly condemned by his peers here for announcing the development and efficacy of the drug despite the absence of any solid evidence of trials, peer reviews, or publication in scientific journals.

The researcher said last year that pearl omega helped the body rebuild cd-4 t-cells, which are among those attacked by the virus.

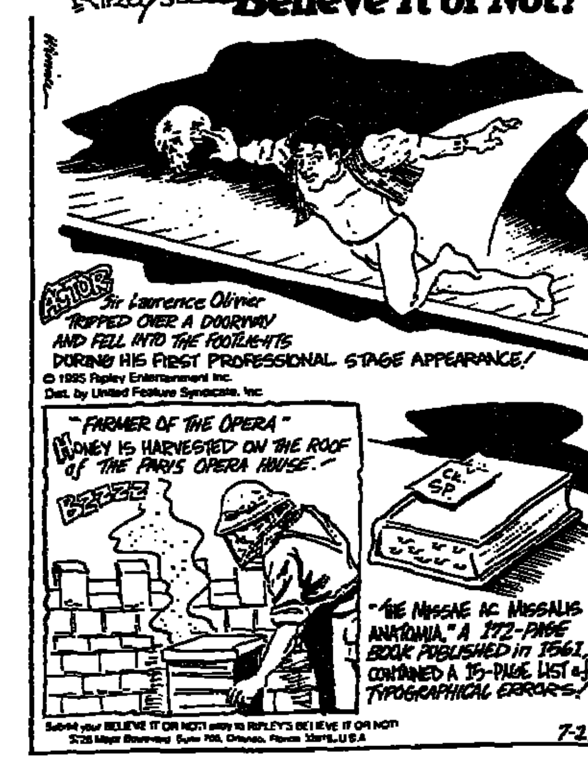
In February last year, obel said that seven patients with HIV who had taken the drug subsequently tested negative.

The kenya AIDS society, an association of people infected with the HIV virus, had sued Obel in a bid to prevent him from selling pearl omega.

Obel was quoted as saying the drug will be "available elsewhere soon" despite the ban.

He was also associated with a previous Kenyan AIDS "cure" known as kemron, which was discredited by international researchers, although it is still being sold and is reportedly popular among some black Americans infected with the HIV virus.

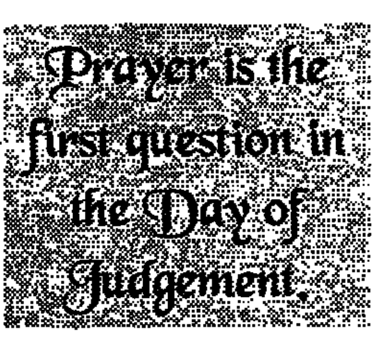
(AFP)



THOUGHT

A man never feels the want of what it never occurs to him to ask for.

Arthur Schopenhauer



PREYER

Noon..........................12:20
Evening.......................18:03
Dawn (tomorrow)...........05:33
Sunrise (tomorrow).........06:55

Mandela's Surgeon Wins U.S. Approval for New Eyeball Scrubber

JOHANNESBURG — A South African surgeon has won approval from U.S. authorities for an invention that allows laser surgery on the eye to be painless and quicker, the *Sunday Times* newspaper reported.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration this week approved the use of doctor Percy Amoils' rotary epithelial scrubber, which has already been successfully used on hundreds of South African patients.

The device, which was patented in 1994 and subjected to thorough clinical tests, closely resembles the electric toothbrush which, according to Amoils, inspired its invention.

The scrubber is used prior to laser surgery to correct visual defects such as short and long-sightedness.

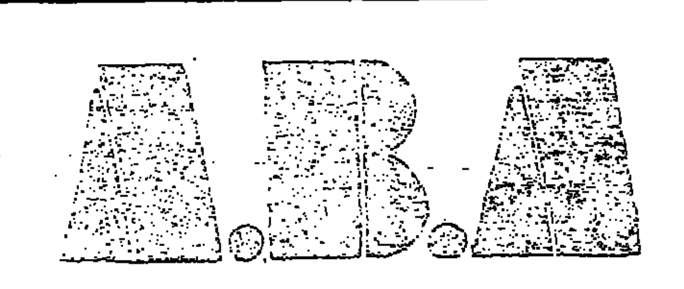
Previously, surgeons had to scrape off the epithelium – the membrane covering the eyeball – with a scalpel, before they could fire the laser. This produced a rough surface on the eye that delayed healing, the report said.

Amoils' scrubber, however, cleanly removes the membrane and leaves the eye ready for the laser. It also shortens the entire operation to 15 minutes.

Amoils, regarded as one of the world's leading eye specialists, operated on president Nelson Mandela in 1995 to remove cataracts that had grown on his eye during his 27 years as a political prisoner.

(AFP)





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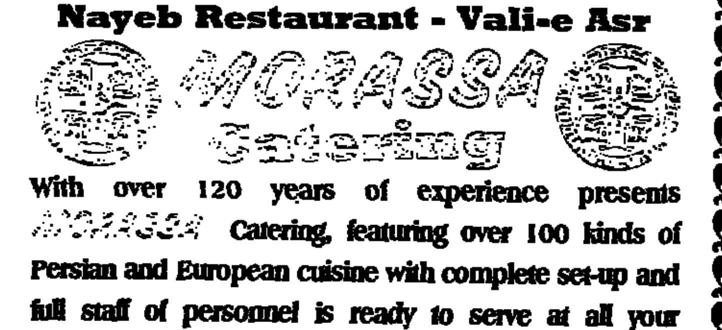
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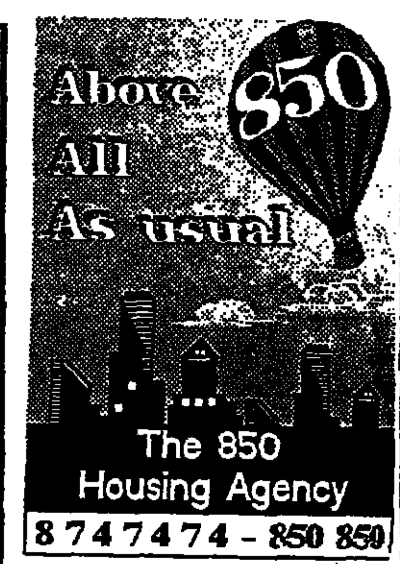
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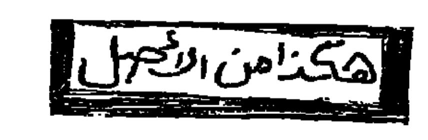
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Kohl Pressured
Sides on Germa

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Kohl Pressured From Many Sides on German Pensions

BONN — Chancellor Helmut Kohl, already at pains to contain feuds in his own party, faced a clash with his free democrat coalition partners after they demanded a blueprint to reform Germany's pension system be redrawn.

The Liberal Party's call for a fresh approach to pension reform, possibly Bonn's most explosive political issue this year, opened up another fault line in the 14-year coalition that has made Kohl the longest-serving postwar chancellor.

It came after a hectic weekend of meetings which reaffirmed a split over tax reform between Labor Minister Norbert Bluem, father of the controversial pension plan, and Finance Minister Theo Waigel and his tax-cut proposals.

The bitter rows focus on a complex debate about how Bonn can pump more money into the overburdened pensions system while tightening budgets to meet Europe's single currency criteria and cutting taxes to help create new jobs.

Kohl's authority suffered badly after the reform projects he delegated to Bluem and Waigel both ended up requiring higher costs that partly cancelled out each others' benefits.

The pro-business FDP compared the pension reform plan to a pullover riddled with dropped stitches. We have to unravel it now, FDP social affairs spokeswoman Gisela Babel said.

Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) came to Bluem's aid, rejecting the call for a new commission and denying that Bluem – the last remaining minister from Kohl's original 1982 cabinet – would resign over the dispute.

Norbert Bluem is a crown jewel of CDU policies and we are not going to give him up, General Secretary Peter Hintze said.

But that hardly solved the problems looming behind the minister's differences with Kohl, who chastised Bluem in public for saying he could no longer be trusted, or with Waigel.

Waigel, whose tax reform was to be the centrepiece of Kohl's reelection strategy next year, urged a hike in taxes on pensions to make up for revenues lost because of lower tax rates. Bluem was the only CDU leader who voted against it.

For his part, Bluem pressured Waigel by calling for a politically sensitive rise in value-added tax to help finance the pension system, which is already groaning under ever higher costs caused by the graying of the German population.

At a weekend meeting, Bluem won support from the social affairs minister in Bavaria – home of Waigel's Christian Social Union (CSU) Party – for his plan.

Among his CDU supporters were parliamentary speaker Rita Suessmuth and deputy floor leader Heiner Geissler, one of Kohl's loudest critics within the party.

A prominent FDP state leader, Walter Doering, urged Bluem at the weekend to resign.

Bluem is turning more and more into a hindrance for the coalition, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Party leader said. We tell people they will pay much fewer taxes and Bluem has nothing better to do than announce a VAT increase. We can't let him get away with this.

Opinion polls at the weekend showed increasing public dissatisfaction with Kohl and his government's feuds.

Sixty-one percent of those queried by the Emnid group felt the tax reform plan was not a good one and doubted it would help the economy grow.

The poll showed Kohl's CDU dropping two points to 37 percent, even with the opposition Social Democrats (SPD).

For the first time in 15 years, the CDU risks getting an image among voters as a party that can't manage the state's finances, Emnid's Klaus Peter Schoeppner said. Its future stands and falls with the tax reform.

The SPD should have an easy time of it now . .. but it simply cannot find a way to profit from the CDU's crisis. Voters seem to know the SPD has no solution either. *(Reuter)*

Violence in Basque Country After ETA Member's Suicide

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain —Nine people were injured and 37 arrested in a wave of weekend violence in Spain's Basque country after a member of the ETA separatist organization hanged himself, police said.

Jose Maria Aranzamendi, 41, who had been in preventive detention for two years on charges of membership of an armed organization and murder, hanged himself using a scarf from the bars of his cell window.

Aranzamendi's body arrived Sunday in his home town of Elorrio, near the northern city of Bilbao, in a coffin draped with the ETA colors and emblem as several thousand mourners shouted pro-ETA slogans.

The worst violence occurred overnight Saturday in several towns near San Sebastian.

In Azpeitia a woman received second-degree burns from a petrol bomb, and in Zumarraga, three people were injured, one seriously, in clashes with police.

In Tolosa, two people were slightly injured by a petrol bomb, and the local unemployment office was partly destroyed by fire.

The Basque administrative capital Vitoria was the scene of several clashes between ETA supporters and police, and several people were arrested including Antxon Morcillo, a key figure in Herri Batasuna, ETA's political wing.

Morcillo, a member of Herri Batasuna's collegial leadership, was picked up for attacking a police officer during a protest over Aranzamendi's death, Basque police said, adding that Morcillo was quickly released.

In Pamplona, 10 young people were detained briefly for putting up posters condemning the death of Aranzamendi, who was the third ETA activist to have committed suicide in prison. Demonstrators also set fire to several telephone booths.

Unrest in San Sebastian spilled over into Sunday, when masked assailants torched a Socialist Party office and a city bus, but no one was injured.

In Bilbao, three separatist youths torched a railway station, partly destroying it.

ETA, which stands for Basque homeland and freedom, is fighting to create an independent Basque state in northern Spain.

(AFP)

Nauru's Four Presidents Reelected

AUCKLAND — The four men who in the past three months have been president of Nauru, the world's smallest republic, were all reelected in polls intended to end the political tangle, it was reported Monday.

But Nauru's sole female politician, former Finance Minister Ruby Dediya, lost her seat as did the speaker Maein Deireragea, government owned Nauru broadcasting reported.

Reelected Saturday to the 18-seat Parliament was care-taker President Rueben Kun, along with Bernard Dowiyogo, Lagumot Harris and Kennan Abeang who in a 10 week period late last year all had turns as president.

The assembly will meet again in the next two weeks to elect a new president.

Elections in Nauru are normally held every three years but came a year early because of the political tangle which has seen presidents elected by the assembly on no more than one vote majorities.

Although the elections were fought on clan and family lines, they come against the backdrop of a rapidly worsening economy.

Nauruans once had the world's highest per capita income thanks to its phosphate rich topsoils, strip-mined and exported to Australia and New Zealand.

Now the phosphate is running out, leaving Nauru, once named by European explorers pleasant island, a bleak moonscape of bleached coral pinnacles.

The economy has also suffered due to a series of doubtful or non performing investments around the world.

Nauru, a 21 square kilometer (eight square miles) island 4,300 kilometers (2,666 miles) north of here, is home to around 10,500 inhabitants. *(AFP)*

Serbian Crisis the Best and Worst of Times

BELGRADE — To hear Aleksa Djilas tell it, living through Serbia's political crisis has been both good and bad, sort of like being pampered when you're sick.

"An illness is a problem, but then for example your friends pay more attention to you, which is nice," the Belgrade sociologist said. "Nonetheless, you prefer to be cured." But listen to Zarko Korac and you'd think it's been the best show in town, something people will actually miss. "There will be some nostalgia," the psychologist said.

Their comments reflect many Serbians' mixed emotions as the long-running crisis crawls down the homestretch.

Relief for some and mild disappointment for others could come Tuesday when Parliament votes on a bill reinstating opposition wins that President Slobodan Milosevic's regime had annulled after local elections in November.

Playing it safe, opposition leaders hint they will wait until the disputed city assemblies are in their hands, which could take two weeks, before clearing the streets.

In the meantime all sides agree that the opposition has scored a key victory with 12 heady weeks of pro-democracy fervor against the Wily Overseer of Eastern Europe's last communist-style regime.

And they agree that even when the protests do eventually stop, plenty of momentum remains for filling the streets right back up again as the opposition tackles even bigger issues, like press freedom, in the run-up to elections due late this year.

But one of the things they differ on is whether they've had fun along the way.

Nebojsa Ilic, a 34-year-old biologist, did.

"Of course I will miss the rallies," he said while standing among a whistle-blowing crowd at Republic Square in the Belgrade city center.

"I've seen people here whom I haven't seen since high school," he added. "It became a kind of social thing to come to the afternoon rally, see friends and exchange the latest news and a bit of gossip." So did Mirjana Kostic, a 54-year-old housewife. "The protests became a daily routine for me and my friends," she said. "We don't have to make appointments any more, we know we'll meet at Republic Square." Korac, the psychologist, said the movement had a special carnival atmosphere at the beginning, before the government banned most protest marches and penned the demonstrators in at the square.

"At first people could walk anywhere," he said. "They felt free, they were laughing. Once they were confined to the city center it changed a little bit." "That's why Milosevic did it," he added. "It's almost like a prison ward. You have to walk within the perimeters." But Djilas, the sociologist, said many Serbians told him any warm glow of nostalgia is tempered by sheer physical exhaustion and relief that something so time-consuming and disruptive of work and family life might soon be over.

And he said the key thing now for Serbians in general and opposition leaders in particular is not to get cocky.

"There is a temptation now to think that with demonstrations we can solve everything," he said.

He and other analysts say opposition leaders have to harness the momentum of the protest movement by presenting specific proposals to remedy deeper, underlying problems – Serbia's dismal economy and the government's virtual monopoly on the media – as the elections approach.

With the municipal vindication in their pockets, they have to press for reform through formal legal channels, rather than on the streets, and not forget that their adversary is formidable.

"It's like a boxing match," said Korac. "Both opponents are still on their feet. And one is much bigger."

(AFP)

Major Still the Most Popular Tory

LONDON —Prime Minister John Major is still favorite to lead the ruling Conservative Party despite its flagging fortunes, an opinion poll published in the *Daily Telegraph* showed.

None of Major's rivals would make respondents more inclined to vote Tory in the upcoming general election, the gallup poll indicated.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine came second to Major, on minus four percent, followed by the pro-European Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth

(Contd on Pg. 14)

Constitutional Convention on Republic Due in November or December

CANBERRA, Australia — Australia will hold a constitutional convention in November or December to consider severing its last colonial ties to Britain and become a republic, lawmakers decided.

As a vestige of its colonial past, Australia's head of state is not an Australian – it is Britain's Queen Elizabeth II.

Half the delegates to the convention will be elected by popular vote and half will be appointed by Prime Minister John Howard's Conservative government.

Howard told his legislative colleagues in the liberal and national parties of the plan in the party caucus room and they approved it.

Howard "said the present system has clearly served us well, but there is interest in change among certain people in the Australian population, and therefore the government will facilitate a proper discussion on those matters," his spokesman said.

"Secondly, if there is to be a change, any system to which we change should be as good if not better than what we have at the present time," he said.

Australia, unlike the United States, has never formally broken its colonial ties with England, which many older Anglo-Saxon Australians still affectionately call "the mother country." While Howard is among the most loyal of her Britannic Majesty's subjects, even he has felt impelled in recent months to draw a line in the sand as opinion polls show a growing majority, now 54 percent, favors a republic.

He said in December that he believes the Australian prime minister, not the queen, should open the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The constitutional convention would recommend how a vote on the republic issue should be put to the public.

The crucial vote on the republic itself is still a long way off, with no firm date yet in sight.

Even a popular vote in favor of an Australia Republic might not be enough to make it happen.

Australia's constitution requires approval in a majority of the nation's six states, as well as the voting public, to succeed.

At the current rate of reform, Britain could become a republic before Australia does. *(AP)*

Preliminary Results Say Yeltsin's Ex-Bodyguard Wins Deputy's Chair

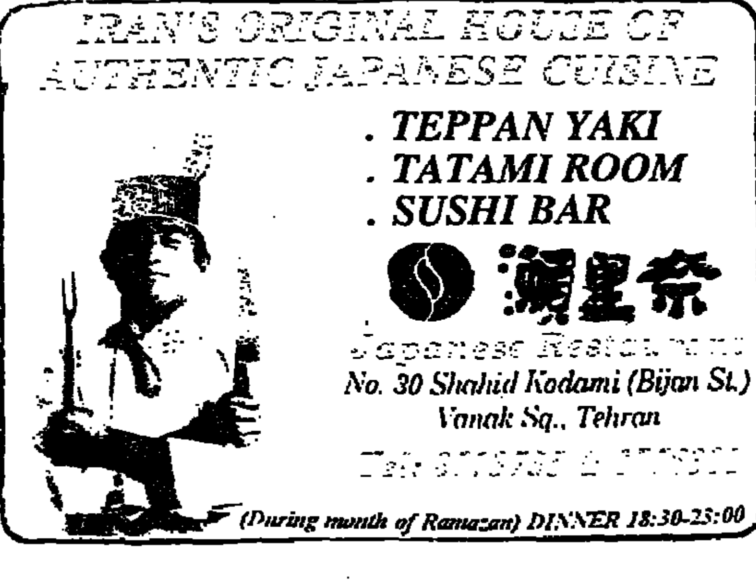
MOSCOW — Russian President Boris Yeltsin's former chief bodyguard Alexander Korzhakov, sacked last June, seems to have secured his political comeback in a Sunday parliamentary by-election, the Interfax news agency reported.

According to preliminary results released by the Central Election Committee in Tula, Korzhakov has secured 26.32 percent of the votes cast in Sunday's regional election, besting his closest competitor by nearly 10 percent.

The last candidate from the Tula region to be elected to the Duma, or Lower House, was Maverick ex-General Alexander Lebed, who won in a landslide election.

Lebed, who vacated his seat to become head of the National Security Council only to be fired late last year during Kremlin infighting, strongly supported Korzhakov in his campaign bid.

Korzhakov leads a colorful cast of candidates in the Tula race which included world chess champion Anatoly Karpov and the wife of disgraced financier Sergei Mavrodi, whose pyramid scheme bankrupted thousands when it crashed in 1994. *(AFP)*



History at Your Fingertips in Britain's Archives

LONDON — From Shakespeare's will to Captain Bligh's log recalling the mutiny on the Bounty, history is in your hands at Britain's National Archives.

Edward VIII's signature on the abdication document that shook the monarchy, Lawrence of Arabia's campaign maps, the 11th century Domeday Book — the hi-tech building is a time capsule of the nation's history.

Up to 800 researchers a day delve into the millions of documents stacked on the 96 miles (155 km) of shelves at the Public Record Office.

Nine hundred years of history are there to be explored and everyone is welcome. Every new year, journalists pore over cabinet secrets newly released by the government after a statutory 30 years gathering dust.

Australians, Americans Seek Ancestors

Entrance is free and a reader's ticket allows entry to the old and the new world. Australians look for details of ancestors deported as convicts. Americans whose forebears started a new life in the colonies hunt for clues to their family trees.

Pens are banned, only pencils are allowed. But you can photocopy documents and use a personal computer.

Readers are summoned by individual bleepers after staff using mechanized trolleys have scoured four floors of documents to track down the treasures the visitors need.

"To hold in your hand the actual log of HMS Bounty that Captain Bligh took with him when cast away in an open boat is a real thrill," said Anne Crawford, press officer of the Public Record Office.

Nine hundred years of history are there to be explored and everyone is welcome. Every new year, journalists pore over cabinet secrets newly released by the government after a statutory 30 years gathering dust.

"Touching the Domesday Book (Britain's first census), and realizing William the Conqueror did too, is amazing," she said.

Great tragedies can be relived from the 16th century trial of Henry VIII's ill-fated wife Ann Boleyn to the 1649 trial of King Charles I that ended in his death on the scaffold.

Price Incalculable, Security Tight

"You couldn't begin to put a price on it in the open market. It is incalculable. I couldn't honestly tell you how many documents we have," Crawford said.

Security is tight. Computers log the identity of every reader, cameras scour the reading room. The office has a staff of almost 500 and a £30 million ($50 million) budget.

Everyone is searched when they leave the office, situated beside the world-famous botanical gardens at Kew in west London. Microfilmed records are stored at another central London location.

But Crawford admits: "No library anywhere in the world is foolproof. One thief was jailed for stealing beer labels from the patents register. He was picked up on closed circuit television taking a blade to them," she said.

Contractors removing asbestos from storage rooms stole King George VI's royal warrant granting the then Princess Elizabeth formal permission to marry the Duke of Edinburgh. Police retrieved the document when the thieves tried to sell it.

Fire the Recurring Nightmare

"Fire is a recurring nightmare but every document room can be isolated by metal doors. Smoking is banned. The equipment is so sensitive it will pick up someone having a quick puff in the loo (toilet)," Crawford said.

The daily cast in the reading room is truly international. "We have students from all around the world seeing Britain's view of their country," she said.

And every year reveals new treasures as Britain slowly — some would say grudgingly — lifts the veil on the secrets of its past.

Of special interest are the secret agents who went behind enemy lines in World War II. Government departments are gradually releasing documents after checking for national security risks.

"Everyone is waiting for the war records from the Balkans, France and the low countries. The Balkans are the next we are expecting later this year," Crawford said.

(Reuter)

This Is a Story About Nothing

NEW YORK — There really is something to nothing.

Physicists have known for most of the 20th century that emptiness is really kind of full. The vacuum, as physicists call it, is full of particles that pop into existence for such short periods of time that they can't be detected directly.

But the particles can have real, observable effects, as a recent experiment by Steve Lamoreaux of the Los Alamos National Laboratory demonstrates.

While working at the University of Washington in Seattle, Lamoreaux set out to demonstrate an effect predicted nearly 50 years ago by Dutch physicist Hendrik Casimir. Casimir calculated in 1948 that so-called virtual photons, which spontaneously burst into existence like kernels of popping corn and then disappear almost instantly, ought to push two narrowly separated metal plates together.

For five decades, nobody bothered to challenge Casimir's prediction. The theory behind the prediction, known as quantum electrodynamics, is so sound that almost nobody dreamed it could be wrong.

A cornerstone of modern physics, quantum electrodynamics describes how particles behave in electromagnetic fields. The theory describes natural phenomena so well that some physicists consider it the most successful scientific theory going.

"Nowadays quantum electrodynamics needs confirmation no more than Newton's laws or Einstein's special relativity," said Michael Eides, a physics professor at Pennsylvania State University.

So nobody ever bothered to test Casimir's prediction. Everybody just assumed it must be true, because it was based on such ironclad physics.

Yet in a fit of prankishness, and as a demonstration for his students at the University of Washington, where he taught until last summer, Lamoreaux figured, "Why not measure it?"

"You never know what you're going to find when you do an experiment," he said.

To no one's surprise, the theory worked just fine. As Lamoreaux incrementally moved a pair of metal plates closer and closer to one another, to distances a hundredth the thickness of a human hair, the plates began to feel an attraction to one another in exact accordance with Casimir's quantum electrodynamical predictions.

"It's a real property of space itself," Lamoreaux said. "It's really a weird thing."

The two plates felt only a minuscule force, about what's exerted by a protozoan's flapping flagellum. Yet no matter how slightly, the presence of the two metal plates changed the character of empty space so as to generate the force.

The two plates attract each other because the space between them is like a box, explained Charles Sukenik, a University of Wisconsin physicist who has also demonstrated phenomena predicted by Casimir. Virtual photons can be thought of as waves coming in a range of sizes, and when the plates are extremely close the longest waves are excluded from the box.

Since those longest wavelength photons can't pop into existence between the plates, the total energy of virtual photons inside the box is lower than it is outside. That energy difference is what pushes the plates together.

"We have given an unambiguous demonstration of the Casimir force with accuracy of order five percent," Lamoreaux wrote in a paper describing his experiment. The paper appeared this month in physical review letters.

Although some researchers have speculated that the popping particles could be harnessed as an energy source, most physicists find no apparent practical value to Lamoreaux's experiment. It does demonstrate, however, that on the size scale of smoke particles Casimir's is a force to be reckoned with.

That may be of practical concern in the future, when researchers hope to build machines that operate in such tiny realms. Nanomachines, as they're known, could cruise the capillaries to repair damage caused by atherosclerosis, or be launched on space missions at incredibly low costs.

"As we go into the area of nanotechnology and things get very small," Sukenik said, "one has to start to take them into account."

(AP)

Long-Neck Giraffe Women Join Thai Tourist Trail

NAI SOI, Thailand — The long-necked ladies once dubbed "giraffe women" by explorers are now enchanting modern-day travelers along Thailand's rugged northern border.

Women of the Padaung tribe, refugees from ethnic conflict in Burma, have put this remote Thai village on the map for tourists wishing to see their unique brand of body stretching.

The trickle of foreigners who arrive here pay 250 baht ($10) before entering the village to see the women. A portion of the money goes to Thai tour operators.

Starting about age five, Padaung girls have coils of brass rings wrapped around their necks. More coils are added through adolescence, eventually reaching about 5 kilograms (11 pounds) and about 25 rings.

The pushed-up chin gives an elegant impression of a tiny head floating on a golden stem. But the neck is actually not made longer — rather, the weight forces the shoulders to slope down.

After years of wearing the rings, the neck becomes too weak to support the head without them. But the women defend their rings as beautiful and put up with the occasional chafing.

The 30 long-necked women living in this village of 200 people make about 1,750 baht ($60) per month. Some critics call it a zoo — but the women are rich by local standards.

With their earnings — supplemented by the sale of T-shirts and tribal weaving — they purchase gizmos and makeup unknown in their old homes in rural Burma and ensure their children learn English, the language of the tourist trade.

(AP)

Army of Rabid Dogs Stalk Streets of Georgia

TBILISI — The economic hardship undermining post-Soviet Georgia has thrown a new calamity on to the streets of the capital — an army of 10,000 stray dogs infected with the feared rabies virus.

"An average 300 people a day are seeking medical help after being bitten."

With the legion of strays increasing by the day and rabies cases on the rise, the authorities have decreed a state of emergency to help fight off the threat.

"An average 300 people a day are seeking medical help after being bitten," the city's head doctor Zubar Putkaradzeshief said in an interview.

"And while not a single fatal case of rabies had been registered in Georgia in the last 12 years, in Tbilisi alone 18 people have died of the disease in the last six months," he said.

Authorities are placing the blame for the epidemic squarely on the growing number of strays, the result of the spiralling economic problems hitting the Caucasian country.

Families unable to feed pets for lack of funds have thrown them out while animal shelters closed down long ago, also due to a lack of money. A special committee set up by the town hall to deal with the problem estimates there are more than 10,000 strays currently stalking the streets of the city.

The city's failure to deal efficiently with garbage disposal and control has further aggravated the epidemic.

"We were forced to declare a health emergency early this year due to the potentially catastrophic proportions of the epidemic," Putkaradzeshief said.

Vaccines against the disease were available free of charge in pharmacies only a few months ago but the supplies have now run out, he said.

"We sell 80 doses a day at the moment," said Napuli Dekanosidze, who runs a small pharmacy in Tbilisi.

A total of 40 injections are needed in case of infection, with one dose worth $2.5 in a country where the average monthly wage is only $16. Officials fear some people would rather run the risk of catching the disease than pay for the painful cure.

Said one 40-year-old man, however, who was bitten by a dog outside the door of his building, "The treatment cost me $150 altogether. I wasn't sure if the dog had rabies but my life is worth more than that."

"We pick up about 500 dogs a day and then have to get rid of them, not always in the most agreeable manner."

One of the more controversial measures has been the creation of a special dog-catching and extermination squad.

"We pick up about 500 dogs a day and then have to get rid of them, not always in the most agreeable manner," said Bardi Simonidze, a member of the squad.

The dogs are knifed or beaten to death, again for lack of means.

"We understand these dogs must be eliminated," said the head of Georgia's Dog-Lovers' Society, Irakly Viktorov. "But we cannot accept this savagery."

For the people of Tbilisi, the situation is terrifying. "I have forbidden my children to play outside since my five-year-old daughter was bitten by a rabid dog," said one mother.

"The government must take action. We cannot continue living like this."

(AFP)

Hubble Space Telescope Cameras to Be Upgraded

WASHINGTON — Astronauts are scheduled to replace the Hubble space telescope's cameras with more powerful ones when they head to space aboard the space shuttle Discovery Tuesday.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration said the astronauts will spend 25 hours over four days walking in space to complete the delicate upgrade operation, which will include new infrared cameras.

The infrared devices will double the range of the electromagnetic spectrum open to astronomers, according to NASA officials, enabling them to see very remote objects invisible in ordinary light.

The seven astronauts taking part in the 11-day mission will also replace other equipment.

They will add an advanced spectrograph, replace a worn-out "fine guidance sensor" and two on-board tape recorders — one of which has failed and another that is deteriorating.

The spectrograph can hunt for the mysterious "black holes" that are believed to lurk at the center of most galaxies, swallowing anything, even light, that gets too close.

The "fine guidance sensor" will enable the telescope to lock onto a target star.

"The dramatic increase in science is well worth the risk," that the telescope could be damaged during the upgrade, said Edward Weiler, Hubble's chief scientist.

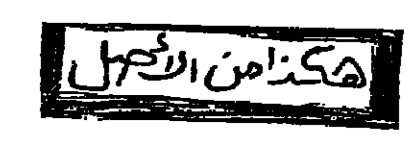
"It will open a new window on the universe," Weiler said.

Some scientists, however, are asking if perhaps the Hubble should be left alone, lest malfunctions in the enhancements actually harm the telescope.

Hubble — launched in 1990 — has orbited the Earth 35,000 times and made 110,000 observations for astronomers from 20 nations, enabling them to study colliding galaxies, the surface of Pluto, and quasars.

(AFP)





War Hits Home When It Hits Women and Girls

Women and girls experience conflict and displacement in different ways from men because of the gender division of roles and responsibilities.

Increasingly, modern warfare is wreaking havoc on the lives of women and girls and on the health and educational services that are key to family and community survival and development.

"Nothing was spared, held sacred or protected", says a new United Nations report by Graca Machel, the secretary-general's expert on the impact of armed conflict on children. "More and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum" in which civilians rather than soldiers are the main targets in war.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "gender-based inequity is usually exacerbated during situations of extreme violence such as armed conflict". Women and girls experience conflict and displacement in different ways from men because of the gender division of roles and responsibilities. The targeting of women and girls by armed forces further exacerbates the situation.

Examples of such targeting and gender-based inequity leading to higher mortality and morbidity (illness) among females during armed conflict include:

Violence against girls and women, including rape and sexual slavery;

Hunger and exploitation in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, when men take control of food distribution;

Malnutrition, when food aid neglects women's and children's special nutritional requirements; and

Culturally inappropriate and/or inadequate access to health services, including mental and reproductive health services.

Far more children die as a result of disease and malnutrition caused by war than from direct attack. Mass population movements, malnutrition, exposure and overcrowding in refugee camps encourage the spread of disease. WHO estimates that as many as half the world's refugees may be infected with tuberculosis. Health services for women, girls and the children in their charge break down in wartime, just when they need them most.

In countries where children are already vulnerable to disease, the onset of armed conflict may increase death rates 24-fold. For example, in Mozambique between 1981 and 1988, war caused an estimated 454,000 excess childhood deaths, above what would have normally been expected. And during the conflict in Somalia, more than half the deaths in some places were caused by measles. Often health services available in emergency situations are dominated by men, so many women and girls, for cultural or religious reasons, underutilize these services despite their need of them.

The population movements and breakdown of social controls engendered by armed conflict encourage, in their turn, rape and prostitution as well as sexual slavery to serve combatants. Unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, are the collateral physical effects of this human degradation.

Since war broke out in the Balkans in 1992, it is estimated that more than 20,000 women and girls have been raped. In Rwanda, between April 1994 and April 1995, more than 15,700 girls and women were raped. Rape can no longer be treated merely as an unfortunate by-product of war and must be punished, the UN report says, adding: "Acts of gender-based violence, particularly rape, committed during armed conflict constitute a violation of international humanitarian law."

"Children may also become victims of prostitution following the arrival of peacekeeping forces", says the report. "In Mozambique, after the signing of the peace treaty in 1992, soldiers of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) recruited girls aged 12 to 18 years into prostitution. After a commission of enquiry confirmed the allegations, the soldiers implicated were sent home. In 6 out of 12 country studies ... prepared for the present report, the arrival of peacekeeping troops has been associated with a rapid rise in child prostitution."

Sometimes armed conflict promotes development of new abilities in women and girls. During the Eritrean struggle, those fighting for national independence established a school curriculum that reflected a commitment to socialist equality and the rights of women. Classes were coeducational and girls were encouraged fully to participate in all fields, particularly the technical ones.

Unfortunately, war more often discourages girls from attending school, because it is unsafe for them to leave home. In Somalia, girls dropped out of school when it became too dangerous to travel to classes. In some cases, this accelerated their early marriage. School attendance is further discouraged when the absence of males means greater workloads for women and girls. This is particularly true when, in the absence of both parents, adolescent girls take over as heads of their households.

In some wars, particularly religious conflicts, certain factions may believe that girls should not be educated. "The recent decision of the Taleban in Afghanistan to curtail girls' access to education in the areas under their control has been of particular concern for UN agencies and NGOs", says the report. For that reason, UNICEF and some other agencies have suspended assistance to education programs in those areas "until there is the possibility of equality of opportunity between boys and girls", the report notes.

The decline in schooling for females during periods of armed conflict has implications for a nation's post-conflict recovery: the World Bank says that education is the single most important factor contributing to national economic growth. Education, or lack of it, also has implications for sustainable population growth on a global scale. Girls and women who are educated will have fewer children, and those they have are more likely to survive and thrive. For example, child mortality in Bangladesh is five times greater among children whose mothers have no education than among those whose mothers have seven or more years of schooling.

When threats of violence keep girls from attending school, flexible systems of "distance learning" are recommended. Distance learning marries broadcast and recorded media with pre-packaged materials such as the "school-in-a-box", consisting of brushes and paints, chalk, paper, pens, pencils and books, created by UNICEF and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). These approaches are also proving successful in displacement camps. Schooling can take place even in the most unconventional sites. In Eritrea in the late 1980s, wartime classes were often held in caves, under trees or in camouflaged huts built from sticks and leaves.

"While all around may be in chaos, schooling can represent a state of normalcy", the report says. "The ability to carry on schooling in the most difficult circumstances demonstrates confidence in the future."

(Courtesy UNICEF)



Sri Lankan Army Push Said to Start Refugee Exodus

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels reported an exodus of refugees from villages in the path of the army's latest offensive in the island's northwest.

Another humanitarian crisis is looming as Sri Lankan forces shell and (bomb) Tamil border villages on the edges of Vavuniya and Mannar districts, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said in a statement.

Heavy artillery fire is raining down on a number of villages causing civilians to flee in massive waves, it said.

A Defense Ministry spokesman said he had no immediate information on the report but other military officials said previous army offensives against the rebels have caused similiar flows of refugees fleeing the fighting.

Government troops, backed by tanks, artillery and air support, were consolidating their positions in the northwestern Mannar region, the spokesman said.

Troops, led by Elite special forces and airmobile units, had advanced 22 km (14 miles) west of the frontline town of Vavuniya, 220 km (135 miles) north of Colombo, he said.

The rebels have avoided battle so far but launched an artillery strike with captured long-range guns on army positions in Vavuniya early on Sunday, their second bombardment in two days, residents said.

The three shells fired by the rebels caused no damage.

Soon after the attack, residents said they heard aircraft bombing rebel positions north of the town.

Two policemen died when rebels bombarded their barracks, the first use of long-range guns by the Tigers on Vavuniya, a strategic town from where government forces last Tuesday launched their biggest offensive so far this year.

The government immediately responded to the LTTE battery with an attack by helicopters and air force bombers.

At least 10 rebels were believed killed when navy patrols and aircraft blew up two guerrilla boats fitted with radar near Iranaitivu Island in the waters north of Mannar soon after midnight on Saturday, military officials said.

The LTTE is fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in this predominantly Sinhalese Indian Ocean Island.

The government says more than 50,000 people have been killed in the 14-year old conflict. The LTTE says the toll is much higher. *(Reuter)*

Australian PM Says Job Scheme Not Slave Labor

CANBERRA — Australian Prime Minister John Howard said his plan to make young people work for their unemployment benefits in a bid to tackle the country's high jobless rate would not create slave labor.

It is not scab labor, it is not slave labor, it is not chain gang labor because people will be paid award rates, Howard said in a radio interview.

Howard plans to try his work for benefits scheme in rural and regional areas where youth unemployment is high.

The national unemployment rate is 8.5 percent but official figures show unemployment among people aged 15-19 years is about 30 percent.

Howard's plan has been criticized by the labor opposition for not creating real long-term jobs and by some youth groups who fear it will create a pool of cheap labor.

They will still have time left to look for long-term employment, Howard said.

We still have eight-and-a-half percent unemployment. We still have 100,000 young people out of work. They (Australians) understand we can't fix it overnight but what they do expect and require of us is that we try different strategies.

Howard's Liberal-National government, which replaced a 13-year-old labor administration last year, inherited unemployment above eight percent and creeping higher.

Australia has experienced generally rising unemployment since the mid-1970s. The rate fell from a late-1992 peak of 11 percent but stopped falling at 8.4 percent in 1995.

(Reuter)

Advertise in Tehran Times

Women Swell Ranks of Working Poor

Women continue to work longer hours for less pay and in worse jobs than men in every country in the world, says the ILO in a new report which highlights "serious discrimination in job opportunities and working conditions for women".

Although women work more, they still account for an overwhelming majority (70%) of the over 1 billion people living in poverty. And women suffer higher rates of underemployment and unemployment than men.

According to the report's author, ILO economist Ms. Lin Lim, "The bottom line is that while more and more women are working, the great majority of them are simply swelling the ranks of the working poor." She argues that while there has been some progress, notably in industrialized countries, "women's economic activities remain highly concerned in low-wage, low-productivity and precarious forms of employment, with men dominating the highest-paying occupations and women the lowest, earning only 50-80% of what men earn".

In a preface to the report, Michel Hansenned, director general of the ILO, highlights the growing economic contribution of women to the global economy:

"Their relatively cheap labor has resented the cornerstone of export-oriented industrialization and international competitiveness for many developing countries, while their willingness to give up home and family to become migrant workers has greatly increased some countries' foreign exchange earnings." None the less, writes Hansenne, "equality of opportunity and treatment for women in employment has yet to be achieved anywhere in the world".

The report, issued as the ILO follow up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, highlights the growing economic significance of women's employment and suggests policies for ensuring better terms and conditions of work for them.

The ILO notes that over 45% of all the world's women (aged 15 to 64) are now economically active. In industrialized countries, well over half of all women work, compared to roughly 37% of U.S. women just two decades ago. In Eastern Europe female participation has been traditionally high, over 50% and has remained so despite the economic transition underway. In south-east Asia the percentage of working women climbed to 54% from 49% and in the Caribbean to 49% from 38%. In south Asian, 44% of women work, compared to only 25% two decades ago.

Even in regions where female participation in the work-force is comparatively low, the percentage increases have been great: IN Latin America it went from 22 to 34% and in northern Africa from 8 to 21%. In regional terms, only the Persian Gulf States continue to resist the trend toward increased female employment; however, the number of female migrant workers to these countries is increasing steadily.

Discrimination Starts Early

The report highlights of discrimination in education as one of the main causes of female poverty and underemployment, with women accounting for more than two-thirds of the nearly 1 billion adult illiterates. In some developing countries, such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Togo in Asia, more than 90% of women aged 25 and up have never been to school. Of the approximately 100 million children in the world without any access to primary education, 60% are girls.

Even where education and vocational training are available, many institutions "continue to offer stereotyped feminine skills for girls", such as typing, nursing, sewing, catering and waitressing, as opposed to scientific or technical knowledge. In poor countries, girls are much more likely than boys to interrupt or halt their schooling in order to tend to domestic tasks, in spite of the obvious benefits of increased education for girls. Says Lin Lim, "each additional year of schooling has been shown to raise a woman's earnings by amount 15% compared with 11% for a man, to reduce fertility rates by 5-10% and to avert 43 infant deaths per 1,000 educated girls".

Gender discrimination, the report says, extends from education to the work-place. Among the most glaring forms of discrimination in job markets are: "Unequal hiring and promotion standards, unequal access to training and retraining, unequal access to credit and other productive resources, unequal pay for equal work, occupational segregation and unequal participation in economic decision making".

A striking example of the concentration of women in low-paying sectors is found in the garment-producing industry, where more than two-third of the entire global work-force is female and which absorbs almost one-fifth of the female labor force in manufacturing.

Even in better-paid sectors, women work at the lower end of the pay scale. Overall, nearly two-thirds of women employed in manufacturing are categorized as "laborers, operators and production workers; only 5% are in professional and technical occupations, and 2% in administrative and managerial positions".

In the services sector, where most women work, they continue to be clustered at or near the bottom rungs of the employment ladder and pay scales, holding "only 14% of administrative and management jobs and less than 6% of senior management jobs". In the OECD countries, women make up between 65 and 90% of all part-time workers.

KARACHI, Pakistan: A boy dressed in a military uniform with a toy pistol stands among the women belonging to Shia Muslim sect shout during a procession organized on the eve of international Al-Qods day on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramazan. Women and men participated in the procession and demanded quick withdrawal of Israeli forces from Al-Qods. (AFP PHOTO)

More Work for Less Pay: Feminine Jobs

Occupational segregation on the basis of gender remains high for all regions of the world, irrespective of development levels. The report cites data for some 500 non-agricultural occupations in the Unites States, the United Kingdom and France showing that approximately 45% of the labor force is organized around gender-dominated occupations in which either women or men make up at least 80% of the work-force. In Japan, women make up 95% of the work-force in such occupations as day care, hospital attendants and nurses, kindergarten teachers, housekeepers, maids and entertainers.

"Not only do men and women have different occupations," says Lin Lim, "men commonly do work of higher pay and status: for example most school administrators and doctors are men whereas most teachers and nurses are women."

In East and south-east Asia, women provide up to 80% of the work-force in export processing zones. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 71% of all female workers are concentrated in the service sector, but the number of unrecorded female workers in manufacturing is thought to be high. In Asian and Africa, most women workers in manufacturing



is thought to be high. In Asian and Africa, most women workers (more than 80% in sub-Saharan Africa) are found in the agricultural sector - where wages are generally among the lowest - and more than one-third of women in nonagricultural activities are in the informal sector. In spite of women's preponderance in agriculture, it is estimated that only 5% of rural credit from multilateral banks ever reaches them.

Women predominate in informal sector work, usually because it is the only employment they can find and where incomes are often at poverty levels. In the Dominican Republic, for example, 70% of women in the informal sector earn incomes below the poverty level.

In all regions of the world, the report notes, females work longer hours for lower wages than their male counterparts. In developed countries, women work at least two hours more per week than men, though five to 10 hours more per week is not unusual. In Australia, Canada and Germany, the hourly Work burdens of men and women are roughly equal, but in Italy women work 28% more than men, in Austria 12% more and in France 11%. In Japan, the time women spend on unpaid work is nine times greater than that of men.

In developing countries women spend between 31 and 42 hours per week in unpaid activities, versus five to 15 hours for men. In Kenya women spend 10 times more on domestic tasks than men. In India, women and girls spend at least 20 hours more per week on domestic work. Family responsibilities, the report notes, nearly always weigh more heavily on women than on men, "even for the relatively small numbers of women whose education and skills qualify them for higher-level jobs".

Last Hired, First Fired

In addition to being the last hired, women are also among the first fired. The report finds that "women's unemployment rates tend to be higher than those of men". In developed regions of the world, officially reported unemployment rates among women for recent years are anywhere from 50 to 100% higher than for men, although in absolute terms more men are openly unemployed (because of their higher labor-force participation rates.)

In developing regions, where underemployment is the greater problem, available data on open unemployment show considerably higher female than male rates in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. The report also cites evidence, including in the transition economies of Central and Eastern Europe, that "discrimination against women tends to increase as unemployment levels go up", with the rationale being that men need jobs more than women: the result is that "women, and especially older women, predominate among the long-term unemployed".

Improving Jobs and Working Conditions for Women

The ILO argues that "increasing employment opportunities for women is not sufficient; there must be action to improve the terms and conditions of such employment". Steps to enhance the quality of employment for women need to take account of the following issues, all of which are covered by international labor standards:

* Enforcing the principle of "comparable worth by providing equal pay for work of equal values". This is necessary in order to eliminate male-female wage differences within industries and to reduce the large differences between "female" jobs and "male" jobs in the highly gender-segregate world of work.
* Improving occupational safety and health for women workers, in order to alleviate and eliminate environmental and work-place hazards, especially those affecting pregnant and lactating women.
* Measures to reduce labor market vulnerability, especially to improve security in informal or atypical forms of work. Women often have to resort to non-standard employment, involving, for example, pat-time or homework, due to the need to combine work and domestic responsibilities. The risk is that such forms of employment are often precarious and not covered by the legal and social security systems applying to standard employment.
* Guaranteeing freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively: For women in the formal sector, collective action, particularly through trade unions, is crucial and collective bargaining needs to take greater account of feminine issues. For women in non-formal, atypical or rural employment, grass roots mobilization and organization is an important form of empowerment.
* Appropriate labor market regulations, which would take account of women's need for flexibility, special protective measures in such areas as maternity protection and child care, and steps towards eliminating pervasive inequality in opportunities and treatment between men and women workers.

Providing more and better jobs for women will also involve a conducive macro-economic environment, including accurate and realistic data, in order to develop coherent and effective gender-sensitive policies. Policies need to consider the legal framework, -- enforcement mechanisms, cultural attitudes and public awareness.

Full-Time, Secure and Stable, Formal Sector Employment

The author of the report, Lin Lim, says that measures to improve women's employment, including education and training programs, labor legislation covering working conditions, social security arrangement and collective representation and bargaining, have been based on the idea that women would be in full-time, secure and stable, formal sector employment. Taxation and social welfare systems have been build on the image of the man as the breadwinner and the woman as the dependent or secondary earner. "That image no longer applies and procedures need to be reviewed in order to accommodate the reality of today and to ensure that new or non-standard forms of employment for women are not sub-standard in terms of human rights, working conditions, social security and career prospects."

(Courtesy World of Work Magazine)

